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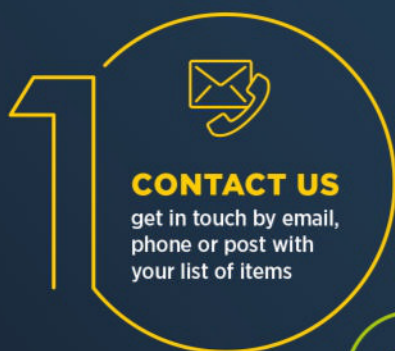
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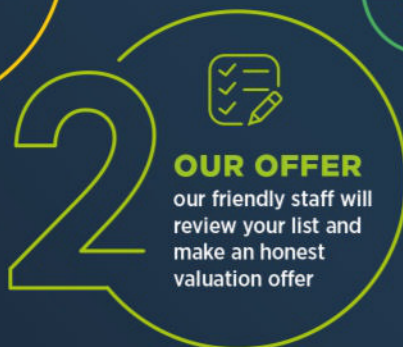
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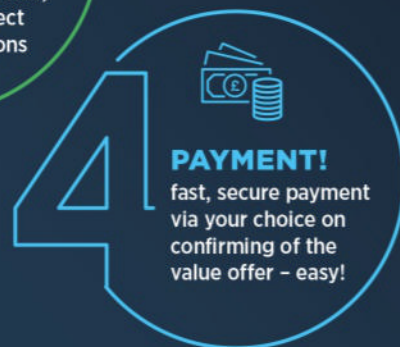
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Cover: The Bala Lake Railway welcomed yet another Quarry Hunslet to its ranks when Paul Lewin brought his 1886-built example 'Velinheli' to the line's Gala over the August bank holiday. Soon after the BLR learnt it had gained planning permission to extend into the centre of Bala itself – the full story is on page 06.

The inset is indicative of a bit of a theme in this month's NGW, looking at the long-lost metre gauge ironstone trains of the Midlands and the museum dedicated to them today.

Photos: Joey Evans and Clive Hawley

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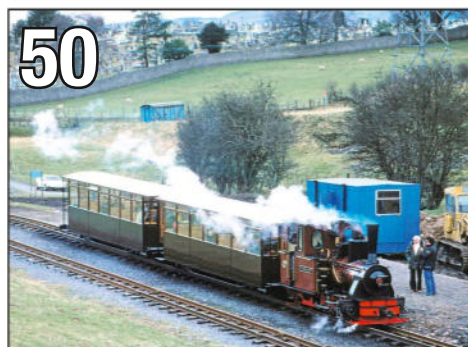
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Big plans, big locos...



"In 2025 we in the UK will be able to witness a spectacle that until now we would needed to travel to South Africa to see..."

Photos: The delightful Bala Lake Railway could soon be going rather further, and Garratts are no longer the only massive 2ft gauge locos active in the UK... Photos: Joey Evans and Chris Parry/FF&WHR

Welcome to *NGW*188 and I must start by expressing my delight that we can bring you some really good news this month. Sense has prevailed and what appeared to many to be a ludicrous reason to turn down the Bala Lake Railway's hopes of extending into Bala itself – basically it would bring more visitors to the town and they'd overpower its sewerage system, has been overcome.

After a lot of consultation, and a lot more money spent, the BLR has its planning permission. We can look forward to hopefully before too long seeing rails being placed on the nice new trackbed that was provided on top of flood defences installed next to the lake by Natural Resources Wales – funded by yet more money raised by the railway, with a lot of the donations coming from local people. When the first BLR train arrives at Bala Town Station, it can be pretty well assured of getting a warm welcome...

On the subject of extensions – in our last issue we indicated that this edition would feature the now major progress being made by a line located not too far from Bala, the Corris Railway, on the huge embankment necessary to allow it to extend south from its current headquarters at Maespoeth.

Well we have most of what we need for the feature, but we've held it for a month at the request of the railway so they can gather a little more information.

Instead this month we turn a

focus on what I think is an often neglected area of UK narrow gauge history, the metre gauge lines of the Midlands ironstone industry. How many *NGW* readers have been to the excellent little museum at Irchester for example? We feature it this month.

There are also a fair few really big narrow gauge engines scattered throughout the pages of this issue. Now I love tiny locos – I'm a big fan of the Quarry Hunslet and the Kerr Stuart Skylark 04-2 is one of my faves (still no sign of anyone doing a new-build version of this lost class unfortunately...). But I must admit I am seriously looking forward to seeing the newly restored Kalahari 2-8-2 pounding up the gradients and round the switchback curves of the Welsh Highland Railway – in 2025 we in the UK will be able to witness a spectacle that until now we would needed to travel to South Africa to see – we are lucky people...

Volunteer competition

I'm writing these words just a couple of weeks after the Gala on my own line, the Welshpool & Llanfair, an event which to me always seems to mark the turning point of the year. The end of the operating season approaches pretty quickly afterwards and then the off-season where so much of the real work in keeping our lines running is done.

On many occasions in the past I've extolled the virtues of getting involved in the off-season – there

are so many jobs to be done and not enough volunteers to do them all, and it's a message I never tire of repeating, particularly following a conversation I had recently with a colleague whose role is partly about increasing the volunteer input to our railway.

My colleague made a very good point, in that the problem goes well beyond the fact that fewer people like to volunteer these days – unlike the pioneer days of preservation where it was seen as a bit of an adventure particularly amongst the younger enthusiasts.

No, what makes the issue more pressing today is that we are now facing competition for the dwindling volunteer resource from organisations that once never used volunteers, but are today pleading for them, such as hospitals and statutory bodies. And they can bring sophisticated recruitment strategies into play to get the people they want, making it all the more harder for our poor old heritage railways to attract sufficient numbers to keep themselves running effectively.

So I know I've said it many times before but the message never gets old – if you are able to get involved with your local heritage line, why not go for it? You may be surprised at how much fun you end up having – being on the inside of the narrow gauge is much better than simply reading about it, as many of *NGW*'s readership will testify...

Andrew Charman

Planners give green light to Bala's town extension



The Bala Lake Railway's long-held ambitions to run into the centre of the north Wales town moved a step closer on 4th September when Snowdonia National Park's planning authority granted planning permission for extension of the line.

The permission allows the 600mm gauge line to be extended by around 1200 metres from its current remote terminus at Pen y Bont, the former Bala Junction standard gauge station on the opposite side of the lake to Bala, to a new location close to the High Street in the centre of the town.

The green light was given at the second time of asking – the initial proposal, which cost the BLR £250,000, was rejected by National Park planners in April 2023 on the basis that there could be no certainty that additional tourists drawn to Bala by the BLR would not contravene Welsh Government legislation on sewage levels.

The rejection caused much controversy, particularly in Bala where the plans have gained widespread support from businesses, residents and the town's MP. As the BLR raised an estimated £100,000 needed to resubmit the application, after consulting with relevant authorities on addressing the issues that caused the first refusal, Bala

residents even took part in a 'spinathon', adding close to £11,000 to the fund.

A further boost came when Welsh Water determined that the town's water treatment works could cope with any increased phosphate levels generated by extra visitors, removing a major hurdle.

Reacting to the planning approval the Bala Lake Railway Trust stated that after more than ten years of speculative work, the dream of being able to build the railway into Bala has become a reality.

The permission comes with a raft of conditions which will have to be satisfied before work commences but BLR personnel say it is exciting to know that this is now definitely going to happen.

Trackbed waiting

Some physical work has already been carried out – supporters raised £277,000, including £80,000 in one month, to fund the inclusion of a trackbed for the BLR on top of flood defences carried out adjacent to the lake by Natural Resources Wales.

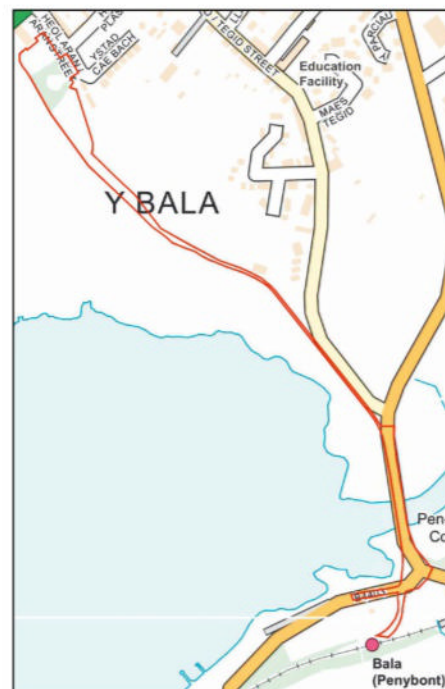
Bala Lake Railway Trust chairman Julian Birley described the decision as "a very exciting day here in Wales" and expressed sincere thanks to everyone who has

supported the line both financially and morally in something that until now was completely speculative. "Without that support this would all still be and remain a dream – that belief in us and the project is what kept us all going and we will never forget that," Julian added.

Above: Bala is virtually invisible in the background behind quarry Hunslet 0-4-OST 'Velinheli' on 24th August, but hopes are rising that the line will soon run into the centre of the north Wales town. *Photo: Joey Evans*

Below left: Just awaiting the rails: A trackbed already exists on top of new flood defences adjacent to the lake. *Photo: BLR*

Below: Map of the extension route. *Map: BLR*



Two big locomotives emerge into the limelight



Two of the largest locomotives on the 2ft gauge have both made their public debuts in preservation in recent weeks.

The Welsh Highland Railway's newly restored South African Railways 'Kalahari' NG15 2-8-2 no 134 made its first moves under steam on 11th September, ahead of its appearance at the line's Superpower Gala a week later. The loco, comparable to the WHR's signature articulated Garratts in size, will undergo a number of running-in and gauging trials over the rest of the year before an expected entry to service in 2025.

Project leader Adrian Strachan described 134's return to steam after 30 years as a momentous day, adding: "The volunteers and staff involved in the rebuild can be very proud that it looks so good and performed very well during the first test moves."

Adrian added that modifications to the NG15 for service on the WHR had been few; "Strictly speaking the loco could run as it was in South Africa, as we don't have any curves less than 50 metres on the

WHR main line – there are some sharper curves in the Boston Lodge carriage shed so we have made some modifications to meet those requirements."

The major changes centre on the fact that the loco will run as often in reverse as forwards, which it did not do in South Africa. "We have centered the dome on the boiler whereas it was historically at the front – this gives us an inch and a half of additional water margin for the fireman to mortgage on a return journey up the steep hill in Beddgelert Forest.

"We have also improved the safety of the cab design by extending the floor to remove the fallplate in the original, enclosing the space with doors, and also modified certain key controls so they operate in the same manner as our NGG16 Garratts".

Meanwhile further south the Vale of Rheidol Railway's Summer Steam Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend saw a first appearance since being secured for preservation of an equally enormous loco,

Gwalior Bagnall Pacific no NM762 (2460).

The 4-6-2 was built in 1932 and worked on the Gwalior Railway in central India, regarded as the longest 2ft gauge line in the world until its conversion to the 5ft 6in Indian broad gauge in 2020.

NM762 and its sister NM765 were saved for preservation by enthusiast Peter Rampton and joined what later became known among enthusiasts as 'Collection X' and eventually the Vale of Rheidol Heritage Collection – this collection incidentally also includes an NG15 Kalahari 2-8-2.

Following the Festival the Gwalior Pacific was returned to storage at the VoR with the line stating it would announce future plans for both it and its sister at a later date. Indications given to *NGW* at the opening of the line's museum in May suggested that one of the two will be the next exhibit restored for static display.

Photos: Chris Parry/FFWHR (above) and Andrew Simmonds (below)



Lynton plans shed for heritage carriage fleet



The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway has submitted a planning application to Exmoor National Park Authority to build a carriage shed at its Woody Bay base.

The application for the single-road shed, on the 'wall' headshunt siding, will provide undercover accommodation for the line's five-strong heritage carriage set.

The line's long-term programme of reconstruction of the original carriages using parts rescued from local gardens and farms resulted in the first two running on the L&B in 2013. These were followed by three more in subsequent years, all constructed at the Trust workshop in Essex.

The quality and craftsmanship of the carriages was recognised by the presentation of the 2018 Morgan Award by the Heritage Railway Association, and in 2023 Charles Summers, founder and leader of the project, was awarded the British Empire Medal for his work in recreating these heritage vehicles.

The carriages are currently stored

outside and in the harsh Exmoor climate extensive spot-repainting and varnishing is necessary each year. "We currently have a team of four volunteers who are continuously employed at Woody Bay trying to keep pace with the necessary maintenance including a planned repair and repaint for each vehicle every four years in rotation," the L&B Trust told *NGW*.

"The Trust recognises that our heritage fleet is the 'jewel in our crown' and that we have a duty of care to the fleet and to the grants, donations and legacies which keeps them and other L&B assets in good order."

Readers can view the planning application documents at <https://www.lynton-rail.co.uk/news/view/proposed-carriage-shelter-planning-application>

Above: The Lynton & Barnstaple is making moves to protect its superb rake of bogie carriages, four of which were pictured behind newly-named Bagnall 4-4-0T 'Sir George Newnes' on 16th August. Photo: Josh Brinsford

Positive response to L&B's local consultation over extension plans

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway is pressing ahead with plans for a half-mile extension to its current running line, reported in *NGW* 187, with the intention being to submit a planning application before the end of 2024.

The plans, agreed following proposals put to members of the L&B Trust, will see the line extended from its current limit of operations at Killington Lane to a terminus at Cricket Field Lane just outside the village of Parracombe,

The railway recently undertook engagement sessions in Parracombe with the Parish Council on 9th July and residents via two additional drop-in sessions at the village hall on 12th and 13th July. Comments on the proposals were also invited via a webform and email.

Following the exercise a Trust spokesman said that all the comments and feedback received had been genuinely appreciated. "We have carefully considered their contents and they have helped shape our thinking as we finalise the application," he added.

Following the sessions the Trust prepared a summary document providing answers to the questions asked, a set of guiding principles for future development of the railway and a list of additional outcomes from the meetings.

NGW readers can download the document at <https://www.lynton-rail.co.uk/news/view/cricket-field-lane-proposal-engagement-summary>

Dougal overhaul gathers pace in Kent

Volunteers from the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway (W&LLR) and Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway

(SKLR) have been making good progress on the overhaul of Barclay 0-4-0T 'Dougal' at the SKLR site in Kent.



The 1946-built loco arrived at the SKLR workshop earlier in 2024 on a four-year loan, with the first two years planned to involve the required works to return this popular engine to steam.

The project allows volunteers from both organisations to share skills and experience whilst giving the W&LLR's south-east based volunteers the opportunity to engage with a project without the need for lengthy travel to Wales.

The loco has now been stripped down to allow a thorough assessment of the boiler ahead of its overhaul. The boiler and smokebox were lifted from the frames, with various components including regulator and washout plugs being removed to allow the best possible assessment to be made.

Welshpool and Sittingbourne volunteers have been working together to strip 'Dougal' down for overhaul. Photo: SKLR



■ Franco-Belge 0-8-0T 699.01 'Sir Drefaldwyn' was the star of the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway's traditional late-summer Steam Gala on 30th August to 1st September, the loco appearing in its newly finished final paintwork following the completion of a long overhaul, pictured here during the Saturday evening photo session at Llanfair Caereinion alongside Beyer, Peacock 0-6-0T 'The Earl'. The Gala also featured Mitsubishi diesel loco DL-34, on loan to the Mid-Wales line from the Alishan Forest Railway in Taiwan.

Photo: James Brett/W&LLR

Manx Douglas gets its boiler back

The project by the Isle of Man Steam Railway Supporters Association to carry out a cosmetic restoration of the line's 1896-built Beyer, Peacock 2-4-0T 'Douglas' passed a milestone on 7th August when the boiler of the locomotive was lifted back into the frames at Douglas shed.

The engine is considered one of the most original locomotives on the IOMSR fleet – last steamed in 1953, it was stored until 2020 when it was moved to the line's engineering headquarters as part of a programme to decontaminate the stored locos of asbestos, mainly boiler cladding.

The Supporters Association announced its plans to cosmetically restore the loco in

January 2023, following a successful exercise with 1874-built classmate 'Mona'.

Restoration of Douglas is continuing in the IOMSR running shed. Photo: IOMSRSA



W&L probes Wickham incident

The Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway has launched an investigation into a derailment suffered by the line's Wickham personnel carrier during the Gala on 1st September.

The vehicle, which dates from 1940 and is the line's only pre-preservation item of motive power apart from the two Beyer, Peacock 0-6-0T steam locomotives, was being demonstrated at the event shortly after midday when it left the track close to the Tanllan carriage sheds at Llanfair Caereinion.

Four W&L personnel were travelling on the vehicle at the time and suffered injuries, one of them requiring hospital treatment.

In a statement the W&LLR said that trains were suspended for an hour while the incident was attended to; "We immediately informed our two regulatory bodies the RAIB (Rail Accident Investigation Branch) and ORR (Office of Rail and Road) of the incident. We have also started our own internal investigation into the incident."

The railway also praised the professional and timely manner in which staff dealt with the issue whilst keeping visitors informed of the situation.

"There was no damage to railway infrastructure

and our passenger trains were unaffected apart from a delay to operations whilst our staff dealt with the incident," the statement added.

Below: The Wickham Trolley, pictured here in 2010 with NGW editor Andrew Charman aboard, is a popular part of the W&LLR's heritage fleet.

Photo: Rosemary Charman



BRIEF LINES



Wren spotting at the Bridge

The Vale of Rheidol Railway's Kerr Stuart Wren 0-4-0ST no 3114, built in 1918, spent the month of August 'outshopped' at the line's Devil's Bridge station, where it was employed on offering Driver Experience opportunities to awaiting passengers.

Photo: Andrew Simmonds

Laxey lacking a run

The Great Laxey Mines Railway in the Isle of Man was forced to restrict services to a short part of its route for several weeks in summer following the discovery of a partially collapsed culvert under the track, close to the tunnel that takes the 19-inch line under a major road.

Volks enjoys late-night runs

Members of the Volks Electric Railway's supporting group VERA have found much success with monthly late-night running. The volunteers have been staffing the trains of the commercially-run line themselves and proceeds have been put towards buying tools and other equipment for the 2ft 8½-inch line, the oldest operational electric railway in the world.

CCLR marks German link

The Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway named its newly returned to service 0-8-2 diesel no 5 'Königswinter' at its Steam Festival weekend on 13th-14th July, the 15-inch gauge line celebrating the northeast coastal resort's twinning relationship with the German town, whose Mayor performed the ceremony with the Mayor of North East Lincolnshire.

Your railway not featured in these pages? Then send in your latest news – copy and pictures can be sent digitally to editor@narrowgaugeworld.co.uk or by post to 12 Maes Gwyn, Llanfair Caereinion, Powys SY21 0BD



All change at Kemsley Down

Visitors to the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway will find a different look to the 2ft 6in gauge Kent line's Kemsley Down headquarters, following an eventful year which has involved volunteers from

Network Rail and close work with the paper mill that the line was built for.

Following the departure in March of Peckett 0-4-0ST 'Bear' to Buckinghamshire Railway Centre, the line's other standard

gauge exhibit 'No.1' (Barclay Fireless 1876 of 1925, formerly of Bowaters Northfleet Mill), to be lifted and rotated to its new resting place.

Teams of Network Rail volunteers have since removed the vacant standard gauge track and replaced it with 2ft 6in gauge track. As well as making a start on rubbing down the paintwork on No.1, ahead of a repaint. They also cleared the sidings around the 2ft 6in gauge Bowaters fireless loco, Bagnall 0-4-0 'Unique' (2216/1924).

An opportunity to improve Unique's location arose as a result of celebrations of 100 years of Kemsley Paper Mill by operator DS Smith Ltd. The company hired the railway, running the first trains for mill staff since the Bowaters Railway closed in 1969, and also requested the attendance of Kerr Stuart 0-4-2ST 'Melior' at an event at the Appleyard social club grounds in Sittingbourne on 13th July.

The railway arranged for the required low-loader to attend a day early to perform an unusual shunt – Unique was dragged out of the back siding and pushed onto the exchange siding by Kerr Stuart 0-4-2ST 'Premier' where the low-loader winched the loco aboard and moved it to the re-gauged plinth track, where it was unloaded.

"It wasn't until Unique and No.1 were next to each other that we really appreciated the size of the Bagnall loco – We had always said that 'Unique' was really a standard gauge engine with the wheels inside the frames," S&K chairman Liz Fuller commented.

Melior was then winched onto the low-loader for the trip to the event. "Melior looked quite strange standing in a field next to a fire engine but acted as an excellent draw for those attending the event," Liz said, adding that both of the line's 100-year old locos have seen some unusual action in this centenary year.

Above: The S&KLR's two fireless locos are now together – and the smaller one at right is the standard gauge example... Photo: S&KLR

Historic structure returns to rail use at Lincs Coast Light Railway

A coal office built around the start of the 20th century at the then Great Northern Railway's Skegness station has been renovated and moved for a new life on the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway, as part of the new station under construction at the line's South Loop terminus in the Skegness Water Leisure Park

The Old Coal Office will become an interpretation centre at the new station showcasing the history of the world's first heritage railway to be built by enthusiasts and will also tell the story of Ellis Bros (Contractors) Ltd, owners of the Water Leisure Park, Waterford and Greenacres holiday parks in the local area and which for more than 70 years, has built much of the modern housing and other amenities in Skegness, Wainfleet and district.

The wooden building was moved to Ellis Brothers' site in Lansdown Road,

Skegness in 1947 by the company's founders and used at offices until 2023, when the scheme for the new station at South Loop was developed.

The firm's founder, the late Mr Fred Ellis wanted the building to be conserved and made available for public use – hence it forming the centrepiece of the new station on the LCLR.

An unusual feature of the building is its clerestory roof, similar to those found on early railway carriages used by some railway companies but not the GNR which operated the line to Skegness until its amalgamation into the London & North Eastern Railway and successors.

The building is in remarkably good condition and is expected to open to the public in 2025.

The new station has been made possible by a grant of £24,250 to the LCLR made jointly by East Lindsey District Council, South Holland District Council and Boston Borough Council under the previous Government's Levelling Up programme. Match funding of £8,000 by Ellis Bros will provide £32,250 for the project.

Work on the site has been delayed and interrupted by the prolonged heavy rainfall which Lincolnshire has experienced since the autumn of 2023, affecting the water table and the ability to move equipment and materials to the site. However good progress is now being made.

Photo: LCLR



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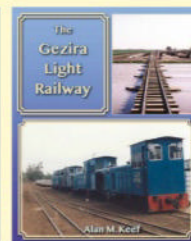
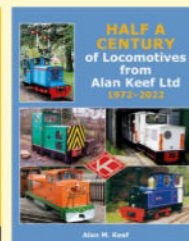
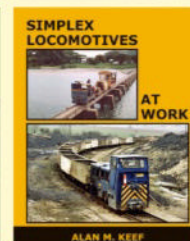
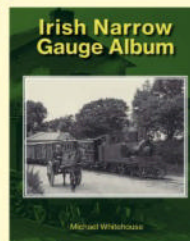
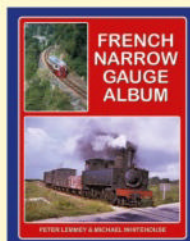
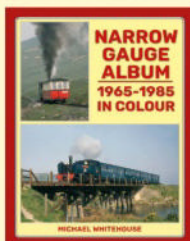
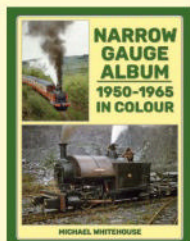
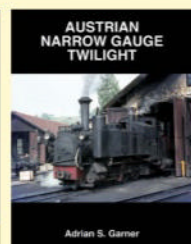
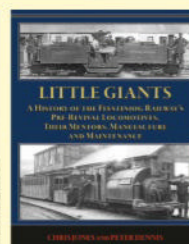
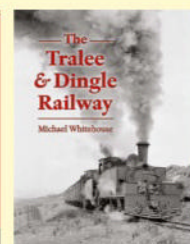
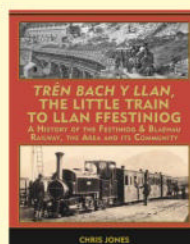
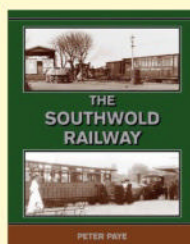
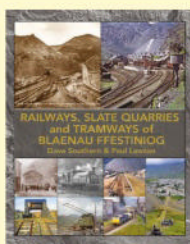
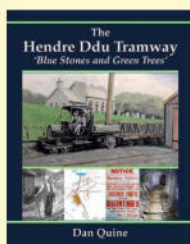
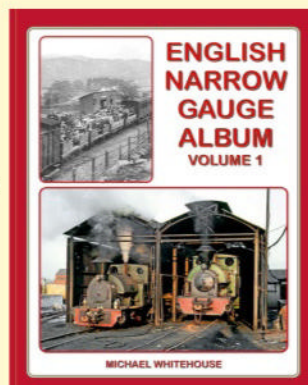
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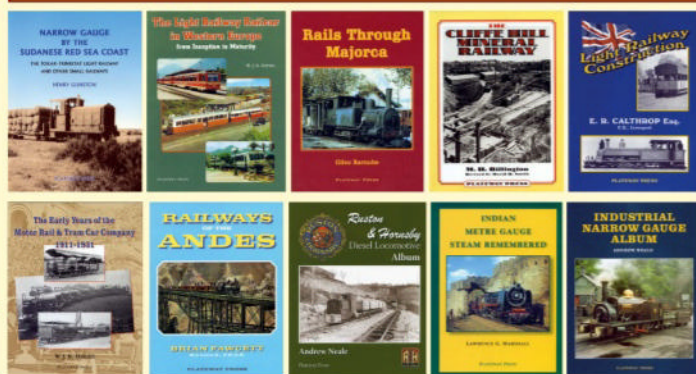
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■ The cosmetic restoration of 3ft gauge Hudswell Clarke 0-4-OST 'Handy Man' for the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust by the team at 'Workshop X', at Killamarsh in Derbyshire is closing on its conclusion. In late August the restored saddle tank, cab and tanks were all tried on the boiler to ensure the last piece of cladding fitted correctly, and to the team's relief it did. The tank, cab sheet and side tanks were then all removed again so that the cladding could be painted in place. Elsewhere in Workshop X the carrier frames for new-build North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway single-Fairlie project 'Gowrie' have been painted, ahead of the fitting of the loco's bunker.

Photos: Workshop X



Santa Teresa on way back at Brecon

The Brecon Mountain Railway is making good progress with remedial work to its Baldwin 2-6-2 'Santa Teresa' after the engine was withdrawn several months ago with leaking boiler tubes.

During the first of a series of workshop walkarounds published on the South Wales 2ft gauge line's social media, recently appointed BMR general manager Stuart Williams said that the entire tube nest on the locomotive, which was built originally in 1897 as a 2-6-0, later converted to 2ft 6in gauge and then back again, had required replacement.

"It was only six years since they were last done so we are not over-impressed with that," Stuart admitted, while adding that the work was progressing very well and the line's workshop staff confident that the loco would be in traffic for September trains.

During the summer months all services on the BMR have been handled by the line's Baldwin 4-6-2 no 2 of (61269/1930), and Stuart added that the locomotive had performed very well with no problems.

Further workshop efforts during the summer have included refurbishment of some of the line's bogie wagon fleet – the BMR prefers to store its coal undercover so deliveries are loaded into the wagons and then stored in sheds up the line.

Meanwhile the line is progressing with its project to build a replica of a 2-4-4 Forney locomotive, based on original Baldwin drawings that have been provided by the Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railway in the USA.

The frames and cylinders of the loco have now been erected and the driving wheelsets are in place, while the boiler has also been built and is currently in store.



Braxted progress may see steam in 2026

The little Braxted railway, a 2ft gauge line opened in April 2022 near Witham in Essex, continues to develop (reports *Stuart Chapman*).

This year has seen the introduction of dining services using the replica Scindia State Railway Carriage which was acquired at the auction of the late Adrian Shooter's Beeches Light Railway. The railway has also recently completed construction of a larger-size brake van which has been scratchbuilt on site.

Restoration of the former Spanish colliery Henschel 0-4-0T (16045/1918) acquired in 2022 from the collection of the late Peter Rampton, continues, with the frames now refurbished and the boiler away for repair. The railway hopes to put the locomotive into service in 2026.

Left: Inter City? On 16th August Alan Keef no 18 was in charge on the little Braxted Railway. *Photo: Stuart Chapman*



■ Ffestiniog Railway members took advantage of a rather special photo opportunity recently when 1979-built Double Fairlie locomotive 'Earl of Merioneth' was given some much needed TLC.

The loco, out of service since 2018 and effectively replaced by new-build Fairlie 'James Spooner' has recently been moved from storage in the works at Glan-y-Pwll, Blaenau Ffestiniog, to the engine shed at Boston Lodge as part of the new tours around the FR's works, detailed in *NGW*187.

Nicknamed by FR members as 'The Square' due to its angular side tanks, The Earl was initially displayed in grubby, distressed 'as withdrawn' condition but in mid August it was moved to the erecting shop, enabling a group of volunteers to remove dust and grime that had built up over the past six years, cleaning the paintwork and polishing brass, as well as attending to areas of rust.

Before The Earl was returned to the Old Engine Shed, the opportunity was taken to line up all four FR-based Double Fairlies - James Spooner, 'David Lloyd George', Earl of Merioneth and 'Merddin Emrys' for what the line's marketing manager Osian Hughes described as a very special photograph. "Unfortunately 'Livingston Thompson', currently on display at the National Railway Museum, couldn't join the party!" Osian commented.

Photo: David Jones/FF&WHR

■ Graham Morris's very well-travelled Kerr Stuart Wren 0-4-0ST 'Peter Pan' has been on the move again, firstly as a guest at the Old Kiln Light Railway's Steam Gala (right) on 7th-8th September where it worked alongside the Surrey line's resident pairing, Orenstein & Koppel 0-6-0WT 'Elouise' (9998/1922) and 0-4-0T 'Emmet', built by Jim Haylock in 2005.

Peter Pan then headed further south to Hayling Island in Hampshire for the East Hayling Light Railway's Gala over the following weekend (below), and was due to complete a busy month on Saturday 28th September with an appearance at the open day of rail engineers Alan Keef Ltd.

* *NGW* apologises for publishing an incorrect date for the Old Kiln Gala last month, confusing the event with one of the line's working weekends.

Photos: Joey Evans and Sean Cullen





Visiting loco 'Hoya' helped with the 125th anniversary celebrations on the Harz. Photo via HSB

Harz celebrates line's 125 years

The Harzer Schmalspurbahnen marked the 125th anniversary of the opening of the Brocken and Harzquerbahn on 24th-25th August with a special train to the summit (reports **Dominic Emery**).

The regular Harz train on the route was piloted for the occasion by visiting 0-6-0T 'Hoya' from the Deutschen Eisenbahn-Verein, which is also celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2024.

Also visiting from the DER was Wismar railcar no T 41 'Der Maus' and this gave rides to visitors between Wernigerode Hbf and Wernigerode Hasserode through the anniversary weekend.

The event was centred on the new steam locomotive workshops in Wernigerode which were open for guided tours and with various other special attractions for visitors.

Forest blaze turns Harz into fire-fighter

Trains on the Harzer Schmalspurbahnen's signature route up to the summit of the Brocken mountain had to be suspended from the 8th September (reports **Dominic Emery**) due to a large forest fire between Schieke and Brocken.

The fire began burning on Friday 6th September on the Königsberg, a side peak of the Brocken which is Germany's tallest mountain. According to local media within a day several smaller fires had merged to form a large front some 1,000 metres across. Around 500 people were evacuated from the mountain as 150 firefighters battled the blaze and due to the terrain being difficult to reach, three aircraft and helicopters were called in.

During the days that the fire was

GERMANY

burning trains on the metre-gauge Harz line only ran to Drei Annen Höhe and the line also provided significant aid to the fire fighting efforts.

Water was supplied to the emergency personnel using converted standard-gauge four-wheeled tankers carried on metre gauge transporter wagons. News videos showed both steam and diesel motive power being used to take the wagons to the fire front.

A thunderstorm helped with efforts to extinguish the fire and it was finally declared out on 11th September, train services resuming on the following day.

An investigation has started into the cause of the blaze. The region also suffered a major fire in September 2022.

Loco derailed in collision on level crossing

Five passengers were slightly injured when a train on the 750mm gauge Weißeritztalbahn in Saxony, GERMANY, hit a lorry that had failed to stop at an ungated level crossing on 19th August (reports **Dominic Emery**).

The incident, just outside Dippoldswalde, resulted in 2-10-2T locomotive no 99 1762-6 coming almost entirely off the track but thankfully remaining upright. A street lamp, signal and transformer cabin were also flattened in this incident.

Following remedial work at the scene the line reopened on the same day and has since been running to a reduced timetable. No. 99 1762-7 was taken to the SDG locomotive workshops in Oberwiesental for the damage to be checked and repaired over the next few months.

Harz to add miles?

On 6th September the Harzer Schmalspurbahnen GmbH (HSB) officially commissioned the preparation of a feasibility study to connect the town of Braunlage to its metre-gauge network.

The plan follows a previous feasibility study that was carried out in 2010 and a unanimous vote in favour of the proposal by the Lower Saxony town's councillors in July 2022.

A suitable site has since been established for a centrally located HSB station in Braunlage which will be adjacent to a cable car terminus.



Left: One of the Harz standard gauge water carriers on transporter wagons employed in the battle against the fire – they are normally kept at the Brocken summit. Photo: **Dominic Emery**



Rack full of problems in Austria

There were red faces all round on the Achenseebahn on 28th August, when loco no 3 'Theodor', built at Floridsdorf in 1889 and one of the oldest regularly working rack locomotives in the world, ran short of water at Fischl (*reports Michael Reilly*).

The incident occurred roughly half way on the metre-gauge line's climb from Jenbach to the mid-point at Eben, with the 14.10 train from Jenbach. The local fire brigade was called to the rescue, sending two fire tenders to help replenish the tanks.

Possibly concerned for the railway's reputation, an official tried strenuously,

but not entirely successfully, to prevent any filming or photography of the event. Normal service was resumed after a delay of almost an hour.

Two days later it was the turn of staff on the Schafbergbahn, another metre-gauge rack line, to feel the pressure. A bright sunny day brought out the crowds and the railway was operating a peak timetable, with all four diesel locomotives in use, together with two of the line's four 1990s-era steam locomotives from SLM.

Unfortunately, the first of these, 1992-built no 11, failed at the summit station in the middle of the day with

a suspected overheated big-end. Its 1996-built sister no 14 was hastily despatched to the rescue, leading to the unusual sight of a light engine on the rack.

Later in the afternoon no 11 descended cautiously under its own steam before entering the works in St Wolfgang.

Above left: The fire brigade brings essential replenishment to Achenseebahn no 3 'Theodor' on 28th August.

Above: Two days later and Schafbergbahn no 14 has just passed Schafberg Alm station on its way to rescue sister no 11.

Photos: Michael Reilly

Visiting trams mark 75-year milestone

The Haags Openbaar Vervoer Museum (Hague Public Transport Museum) has seen several visiting trams from Belgium in 2024 to mark 75 years of PCC (President Conference Committee) tram designs being used in the **NETHERLANDS** (*reports Sjors van Dongen*).

The PCC, considered an icon of tram design, is an American creation, first built in the 1930s and licensed for use across the globe after the Second world War.

Two of the Hague visitors were narrow gauge – between 26th July and 12th August NMVB 10409, from the Musée du Tram Vicinal (light railway museum) in Thuin (Wallonia) was displayed on a specially created section of metre gauge track, allowing the tram to be pushed out of the museum for display by hand.

A special line-up on 4th August included visiting standard gauge Brussels PCC 7065 and The Hague resident 1022.

On 22nd August De Lijn 7072 arrived in the museum, thanks to sponsorship by the NVBS, the Dutch Rail and Tramway Society. This tram originates from the metre-gauge Antwerp tramway where these PCCs have been a familiar sight since the 1960s – a number, including 7072, are still in daily use, although their numbers are dwindling rapidly.



■ Two trams sit outside the historic shed of the Gmunden Tramway on 16th August, while a current generation unit passes by on the way to the AUSTRIAN town's main station. The tramway was celebrating its 130th year of operation with an intensive service using operational historic rolling stock, GM 100 (originally from the Pöstlingbergbahn) and GM 5. *Photo: Sjors van Dongen*



At the Bröltalbahn museum on 11th August, Ns3 diesel V6 was performing demonstration shunts over the new pointwork while former Heeresfeldbahn steam engine 152 sat inside the shed and original RSE no. 52 outside.
Photo: Sjors van Dongen

New track fuels future ambitions

The Bröltalbahn RSE Museum in Asbach, GERMANY has recently expanded its operational flexibility by installing two new points and a short extension of its 785mm gauge running line (reports *Sjors van Dongen*).

The modification now allows more expansive shunting operations to take place outside the original Rhein Sieg Railway shed in Asbach. Founded in 2000, the museum celebrates the original Bröltalbahn that was the first public narrow gauge railway in Germany and once stretched to 87km – it closed in 1967.

In the near future the museum has ambitions to expand the running line to the society's boundary fence and run short demonstration trains for visitors.

Line cut but future looks longer

Trains on the Preßnitztalbahn in Saxony, GERMANY, have been running over a reduced route since the end of May (reports *Christian Jummrich*) while a bridge that carries the 750mm gauge line over the Schwarzwasser river at the station entrance in Schlössel is renewed.

Steam services still operate as usual every Saturday and Sunday in summer, but currently only between Steinbach and Schmalzgrube, with individual trains also running further to the Loreleyfelsen stop. The onward journey to Jöhstadt is completed by a historic rail replacement bus service.

The small shed in Schmalzgrube has been prepared for the interim storage of locomotives with trains currently being hauled by IV K series loco 99 1594. The line is expected to be back in full operation again in October.

Positive news from the line is the intention to extend trains from Steinbach 1.5km down the valley to Oberschmiedeberg by 2030. The station at Oberschmiedeberg station has already been rebuilt and was opened in January,

during which the mayor of the Preßnitz valley and representatives of the railway signed a declaration to keep the remaining 13km of line from Oberschmiedeberg to Wolkenstein clear of any construction in the hope of reinstating the line sometime in the future.

Meanwhile an apartment block built on

the site of Jöhstadt station after the railway closed in 1984 will be demolished in 2025. The existence of the block has made reconstruction of the station for museum operations operationally challenging.

Loco 99 1594 running round on the truncated line on 11th August. Photo: *Christian Jummrich*



■ NGW reader *Nigel Peacock* travelled on the Mariazellbahn from St. Pölten in AUSTRIA on 18th August and found that due to engineering work the 760mm gauge electric line's trains were terminating 500 metres short of the main station at Mariazell. At the temporary station, near the Mariazell Museumtramway's Freizeitzentrum (leisure centre) station a connecting service transferred passengers to the Promenadenweg, close to the town centre and was operated by steam tram 0-6-0T DTKC (BBÖ) no 31 'Stammersdorf' (296.01/1904).

Slides stop Darj trains

Torrential rain around Darjeeling, INDIA on 5th July suspended services on the upper section of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway.

Around five inches of rain fell in a matter of hours, triggering extensive mud slides and causing massive disruption, rail authorities anticipating services would be suspended until late in the month due to debris on the track and safety concerns.

A severe road subsidence at Paga Jhora added to the problems though fortunately the rail tracks were not damaged. Trains continued to run as far as Kurseong.



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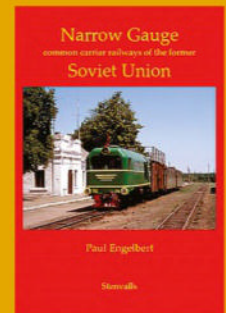
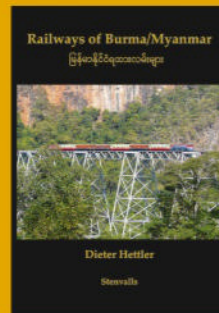
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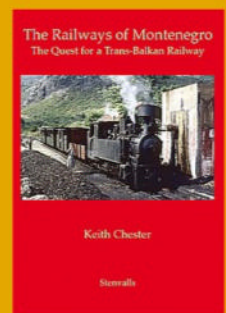
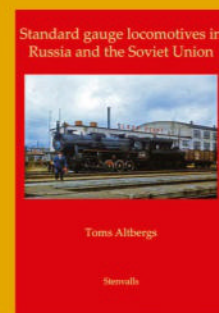
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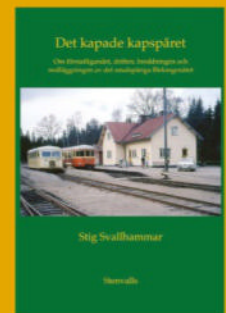
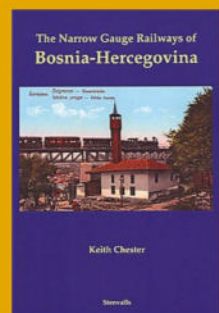
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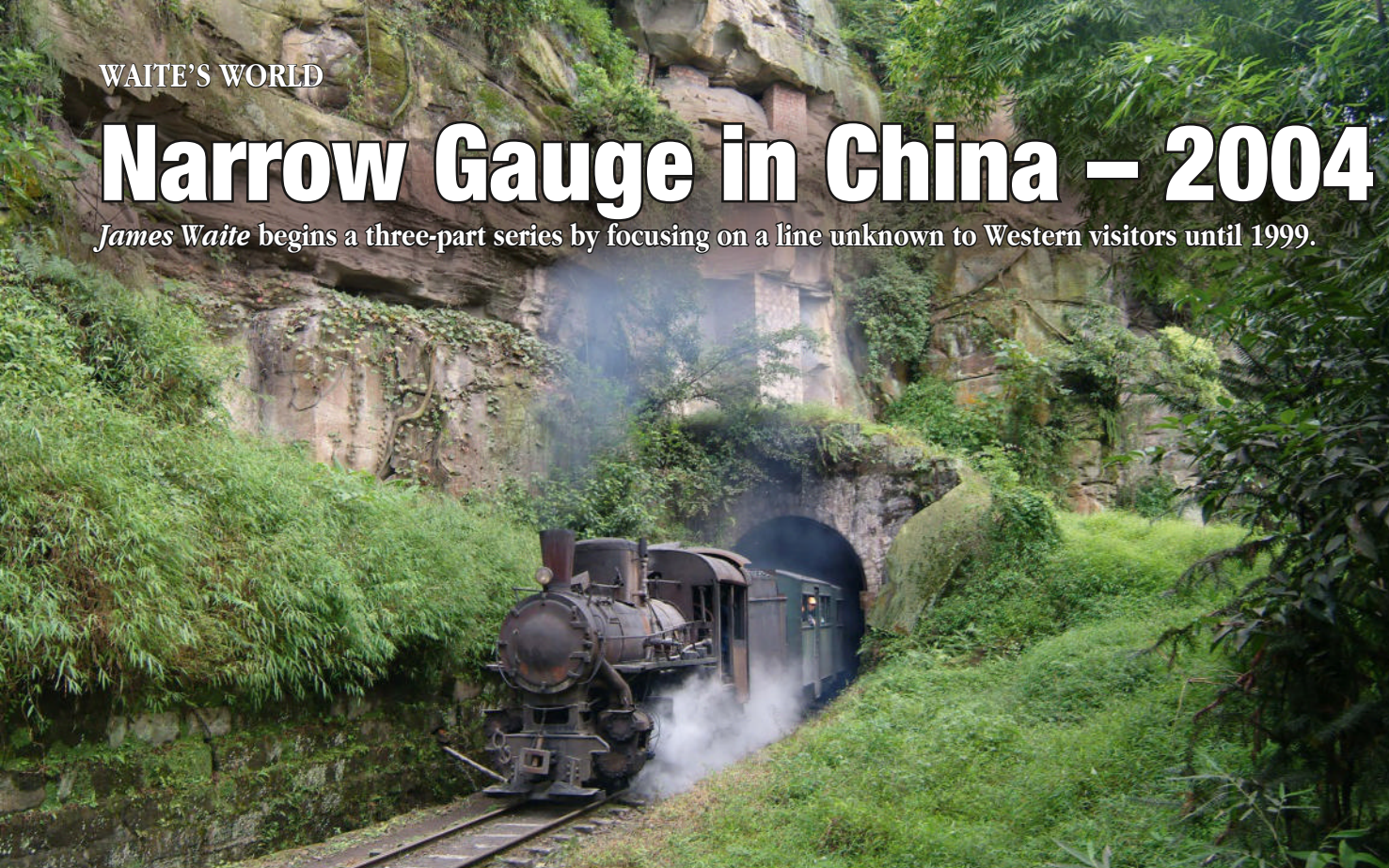
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Narrow Gauge in China – 2004

James Waite begins a three-part series by focusing on a line unknown to Western visitors until 1999.



At the turn of the 21st century many enthusiasts headed to northern China, mainly for the spectacular and recently-constructed JiTong main line, but there were also several 762mm gauge forestry railways. Reports abounded of substandard accommodation, poor food, freezing temperatures and a certain sameness about what passed for scenery, and somehow the place didn't appeal!

Little reported were railways in the south, until in 2003 the French magazine *Voie Etroite* published a comprehensive account, accompanied by superb photos of little trains working through attractive sub-tropical countryside, often among bamboos and banana plants, in a land

boasting comfortable hotels and a veritable feast of culinary delights. I was hooked!

Coal has been mined for hundreds of years in the hills of southern Sichuan. The seam occurrence conditions are complex, and most mines are small. One was established at Huancungjing, near Bagou in Qianwei County in 1938 by the Jiayang Mining Group, initially a Sino-British joint venture. Much of the equipment was relocated from Zhongfu colliery at Jiaozuo, in Henan province which the Japanese army had recently invaded. The group operated two other mines nearby, at Jiaoba near Bagou and at Yuejin.

The Huancungjing coal was of high quality. At first it was

transported away on a 600mm gauge man-powered tramway and then transhipped at Mamiao to small boats on the Mabian River, a tributary of the wide Min Jiang River which joins the Jinsha Jiang at Yibin to become the Yangtze. From there it travelled another 260km downstream to a steelworks at Chongqing, at the time China's temporary capital.

A new line

In August 1958, during China's Great Leap Forward, construction began of a new 19.5km-long railway to connect the mine to Shixi, a port town on the Min Jiang. Named the BaShi Railway after the towns at each end, it used the same 600mm gauge.

About 10,000 workers were involved in construction and it opened on 12th July 1959. Much of the workmanship was shoddy and problems with subsidence began almost at once. In the following year the line was rebuilt, in the process being converted to the 762mm gauge used for most narrow gauge railways throughout the country.

The 600mm line was worked by small tank locos. Larger ones were used after the gauge conversion, perhaps some of the 70 RJ class 18-tonne 0-8-0Ts built between 1959 and 1965 at Chengdu, Sichuan's provincial capital, or similar Yun1118 locos supplied from Dalian and Zhengzhou between 1952 and 1962 or SY ones from Guangzhou. They were the first Chinese-built narrow gauge locos and were similar to Orenstein & Koppel machines built

Above: Chinese narrow gauge – 0-8-0 no 9 exits Eagle Beak tunnel, between Mifengyan and Caiziba.

Below: The two 0-8-0s in use during the October 2004 visit, nos 9 and 14, stand outside Shixi shed during the evening.

Photos by James Waite, 5th and 6th October 2004



for the Japanese in 1937 when they occupied Manchuria.

At Shixi these locos were later replaced by the ubiquitous Chinese-built 28-tonne tender 0-8-0s. When I visited in October 2004 these were numbered from 7 upwards, so there may perhaps have been as many as six of the earlier machines.

New locomotives

The new machines were copied from the Soviet PT-4s, and more specifically the Kp-4 version built in Poland for both the USSR and China. About 575 were produced from the late 1950s at the Shijiazhuang factory, about 300km southwest of Beijing, and 220 at Harbin in Manchuria. Around 30 more were built elsewhere while the last few came from Harbin before production ended in 1988.

These engines are all often called C2s, but strictly this title only applies to the Harbin machines, and perhaps it is better to refer to them generically as 28-tonne locos. The Shijiazhuang ones were known at first as KM-4s (possibly a misread designation on the Soviet-supplied drawings as KII-4, the Cyrillic equivalent of Kp-4), and later as ZM16-4s.

The 0-8-0s at Shixi were mostly Shijiazhuang products, though there are well-equipped workshops at Shixi. In 1974 the Shixi staff are believed to have built no 12, their very own 28-tonne machine, at least in that they constructed new frames and a new boiler, though other parts may have been recycled from older locos. At first they ran with six-wheel tenders similar to the Soviet ones, though the tanks were raised above the frames in what was probably a locally-inspired modification.

In 1991, two 26-tonne SJ380A diesels arrived from the Mudanjiang Forestry Machinery Factory in the far

east of Manchuria, but they cost more to run, and were put into storage from 1996.

Two more 0-8-0s came from the Pengzhou-Baishuihe railway near Chengdu, probably in 2006 or 2007. They had much larger tenders mounted on bogies, with distinctive sloping backs to ease visibility when running backwards. Overhauls took several years, but the tenders immediately found favour, being attached at once to existing locos, and more were built to re-equip the entire fleet. The Pengzhou machines became nos 8 and 18. There are now also nos 16, 17 and 19, all believed to have been built recently at Shixi.

The district had few roads and provision for passengers was essential. At first they were conveyed in coal wagons and accidents were common. Primitive carriages were soon built and at first were attached to the coal trains, but from 1975 separate passenger services were offered.

Initially the coal was carried in wagons made from bamboo, a

plentiful commodity locally, though presumably with steel or wooden underframes. They were replaced by wooden tubs, and finally by small four-wheeled steel hopper wagons.

The Jiayang company opened a large coal-fired power station at Shixi in 1999, at the opposite end of the town from the station. It was supplied from the Yuejin mine, just 4km out from Shixi and reportedly the largest anywhere in Sichuan. In the following year 550v DC overhead electrification was installed between Yuejin and Shixi, and three ZL-14-7 class four-wheeled locos were acquired from the Changzhou factory near Shanghai.

The coal had to be transported through the streets of the town since »



Above: No 14 at Shixi before dawn with the early morning train to Huancungjing. The front portion of the cabside has been removed, no doubt to provide welcome fresh air.

Below: Passers-by walking along the track watch no 14 near Jiaoba on the return to Shixi.

Below left: No 9 – in service on the second day of the visit – is outside the depot at Shixi.





the line was never extended to the power station, which was such a notoriously smoky and unwholesome place that the BBC once ran a feature about its appalling emissions. The electric locos' activities were confined to the Yuejin coal traffic and the 0-8-0s continued to work through to Shixi. The power station closed in December 2016 and the overhead wiring was abandoned – while the Yuejin mine is still open, it now solely uses road transport.

Through the hills

The line starts above the river bank at Shixi and the workshops and running shed complex, a long and dark structure, is close to the station. The route twists and turns through the hills, and midway to Yuejin passes through the first of six tunnels.

Beyond Yuejin there's a reversing station with a bar and café at

Mifengyan, a small village. On many little railways one might expect an opportunity to get out for a leisurely stroll while the loco runs round, and maybe to buy refreshments, but definitely not so here! In 2004 the loco usually uncoupled even before the train had come to a halt. It soon attached itself to the other end and was whistling for stragglers within two minutes or so of arrival. Much the same happened at Huancungjing, and the stops at the intermediate stations could be even briefer.

Beyond Mifengyan the line passes through tunnel no 5, at a picturesque spot under a karst hillside known to enthusiasts as the Eagle Beak. Further on was a horseshoe curve at Caiziba. Just beyond the line's summit Xianrenjiao station in 2004 boasted another bar and a café run by a very friendly family – a good spot to break the journey and enjoy that home-

"It soon attached itself to the other end and was whistling for stragglers within two minutes of arrival..."

Above: Two pigs joined the train at Mifengyan – the second is preparing to board.

Below: Riding with the pigs en route to Yuejin where they disembarked.



cooked meal and beer for which there wasn't time at Mifengyan!

The railway continues through the rich, undulating countryside, with two more tunnels between Xianrenjiao and Jiaoba and another two before Bagou. There's a final section a little more than a kilometre long through a narrow valley leading to Huancungjing and the old colliery, with more karst rock formations. Curiously there is no river bridge larger than a culvert anywhere along the route.

The first western visitors arrived soon after the railway was discovered in 1999 by Li Nan, a tour guide from Chongqing. It was not the last Chinese line to come to the attention of enthusiasts, but for character it's definitely in a class of its own.

In 2004 it was still very much at the heart of the rural community – in many places a footpath ran along or close to the track, and there was an almost continuous throng of walkers, not confined to humans! Motor bikes were also a common sight, a reminder of the lack of roads beyond Yuejin.

The Jiaoba mine closed back in 1988. The one at Huancungjing closed in 2003, though it would later reopen for a few years and the man-powered bamboo-bodied wagons which served it were still to be seen. Some of the colliery tracks were only 300mm gauge, while others were a more respectable 600mm! Despite the lack of coal traffic the four daily return passenger trains kept the line beyond Yuejin busy.

Passengers and pigs

Most carriages were primitive four-wheeled vehicles, with just a single access as all the platforms are on the same side of the track. There was also one bogie carriage, but any notion that this might provide superior comfort was quickly dispelled upon entry – it was the vehicle of choice for people carrying vegetables for sale along the route or just with heavy luggage. On one of my trips this included a stylish twin-tub washing machine brought along to Xianrenjiao station by two young ladies, which everyone helped load onboard.

At one end of the carriage there was a pen for pigs. Two of them joined me at Mifengyan for a ride to Yuejin, fortunately not on the same journey as the washing machine! The pigs were most reluctant passengers. Maybe they knew their single tickets did not bode well for their longevity... More to the point was the distressing brutality when they were manhandled onto the train, which included being lifted by their ears and tails.

Along with the local travellers and



pigs were growing numbers of tourists. One young lady, whose startlingly dyed hair and fashionable clothes were in marked contrast to more local attire, was anxious to assure me (in English) that we were travelling on the most famous railway in the world! Southern Sichuan had become a popular tourist region, not only for its superb scenery and its furry black-and-white residents, but also for historic architecture. The Great Buddha at Leshan, one of China's most noted pilgrimage sites, is only 15km upstream from Shixi, and the giant panda base at Bifengxiang, the original home of the two that became greatly loved at Edinburgh Zoo, lies further up one of the Min Jiang's tributaries.

This new source of traffic has provided the railway with its salvation now that the collieries have closed and local residents have taken to

newly-built roads. Buses have arrived at Bagou! In 2004 the management resolved to develop its tourist appeal and soon afterwards the local authority gave it protected status. Since August 2021 only tourist trains have run. Gone are the old carriages, replaced by upgraded ones with hitherto unknown luxuries such as glass in their windows, and pigs are no longer welcome passengers! There is even a steam-outline diesel, but it's believed that most trains are still worked by the 0-8-0s.

Huancungjing colliery has become a museum, interesting not just for the mining remains but also its murals and slogans from the Cultural Revolution, no longer a common sight in China. There's a guest house next to the junction at Mifengyan, and a railway museum opposite the platform. The exhibits include one of the 1991 diesels, no 9 which was one

Above: No 9 pauses at Bagou.

Below: Running round at the second reversing station at Huancungjing.

Below left: Electric locomotives nos 1 and 3 stand inside Shixi shed.

of the two 0-8-0s in use during my visit, and a standard gauge SY 2-8-2 which was broken down to its principal components, transported by rail and reassembled on site.

The line has inevitably lost some of its old character, but in this respect it's no different from many heritage railways all around the world. Hopefully it has survived China's long Covid lockdowns, and is now delighting visitors once again. **NGW**



Metre Gauge in the Midlands



Clive Hawley profiles the Waltham Quarry Railway, which once boasted the only two French steam locomotives on British soil.

In the shadow of Belvoir Castle and across some of the beautiful rolling countryside of north Leicestershire, a metre-gauge industrial line was built to take iron ore from several open-cast quarries to the mainline. Little evidence of it remains today, but on careful searching it is still possible to detect its course. Whilst there were no passengers on this railway, a journey along it must have been delightful.

The Waltham Iron and Holwell Iron companies each opened up short-lived quarries that yielded only low-grade ore. Hence they leased land from the Duke of Rutland to extract ironstone around Eaton and Eastwell. To the east of the village of Stathern, the Waltham Quarry line began at the end of the Great Northern Railway's Eaton branch, which was an offshoot of the Melton Mowbray

main line to Bottesford Junction.

A large embankment, at least 15ft high, was built to tower above the branch so that the narrow gauge tubs (also known as trucks and skips) could be hand-tipped into main-line wagons below, using a rotary tipper on wooden staging. The width of the embankment also allowed for shunting the tubs and for locos to run round. Below, and to the north side of the ridge, there was a lower area housing the loco shed and office. Corrugated-iron curved sheets from these buildings still linger.

In the 1890s, the line was less than two miles in length. It carried ironstone from Green Lane and Long Hole quarries to the west of the GNR branch. In the early 1900s, it was extended to loop eastward through fields until it crossed the road from

Above: Image of the ironstone – Corpet-Louvet 'Cambrai' dwarfs its train of tubs as it leaves the pits in April 1957. It had been transferred from Loddington the previous year.

Below: 'Rutland', one of the first two purpose-built locos at Waltham. The vertical cylinders may have been to avoid damage by rocks in the quarries. Photo: G.E. Manchester/Eli Coy collection, courtesy Beau and Allan Linley

Belvoir to Knipton and turned immediately northeast to follow the lane. The trackbed remains, with its supporting embankments.

Either side of the line, the old quarry workings are still clearly visible. The trackbed was extended just prior to the First World War to the Branston Lane and adjacent quarries, but this has been well ploughed back into the landscape. After a level crossing, 300 metres down this lane, there still remains the concrete supports of a 'sausage' water tank to replenish the locos.

Metre gauge locos

As summarised by Eric S Tonks in his groundbreaking 1959 book *Ironstone Railways and Tramways of the Midlands*, the Waltham quarries passed into the control of the Staveley Coal and Iron Company, which was already managing quarries at Loddington in Northamptonshire. Exactly why they chose metre gauge for both systems is a question with no definite answer, but Tonks suggests that Sharp, Stewart & Co had two locos of this gauge available as the result of a cancelled order from Spain. The Loddington line was therefore gauged to take them rather than the opposite way round as in normal practice.

The slightly later Waltham system followed suit. It was initially served by a pair of 0-4-0STs probably built in 1884 and 1886 by the Staveley company. They were of a unique design having vertical cylinders, outside frames and geared drives. The first was named 'George Bond' after a



'redoubtable man' in charge of Staveley's quarrying activities. It was followed by 'Rutland', taking its name from the Duke of Rutland, lessor of the ground.

Their ultimate fates are shrouded in uncertainty, but they may not have lasted long after the arrival of a third locomotive that came new from Manning Wardle (1757/1910). 'Dreadnought', another 0-4-0ST, was later fitted with a pair of solid-centred trailing wheels to give greater stability. It had a distinctive green livery with two linings, an outer black edged in red and an inner yellow. The wheels were probably green with red coupling rods.

Dreadnought remained the newest locomotive owned by the company, but three others were then acquired secondhand. The first was 'The Baronet', built by Oliver & Co (102/1889) for the Loddington line. A sturdy but totally basic 0-4-0ST with no cab, it was in complete contrast to the next arrival in 1934.

'Nantes' was a classic Corpet-Louvet 0-6-0T imported from France via the dealers T.W. Ward and originally built for the Chemin de Fer de la Loire Inferieure. It had one of the few makers' plates cast when the firm was owned by Veuve ('Widow') Corpet and L Louvet (936/1903). Despite having interior signage and instructions in French, the crew found it to be 'a very useful engine'. The Baronet was by contrast a totally inferior product and on withdrawal in 1949 was left to rust away on a loop line.

Dreadnought and Nantes then worked the line together until 1956 when the Manning Wardle required a heavy overhaul. 'Cambrai', a similar Corpet-Louvet (493/1888) to Nantes, was transferred from the Loddington quarries. It had been acquired via T.W. Ward in 1936 when the two engines gained the unique distinction of being the only steam locos built in France to work in Britain.

They were now both on the same railway, but it was to be a short-lived pairing. Initially, Cambrai was not a success so Dreadnought was prematurely restored to duties. Eventually, Cambrai's idiosyncrasies were mastered. Dreadnought returned to the workshop and it was now the turn of Nantes to languish in a siding.

Last days

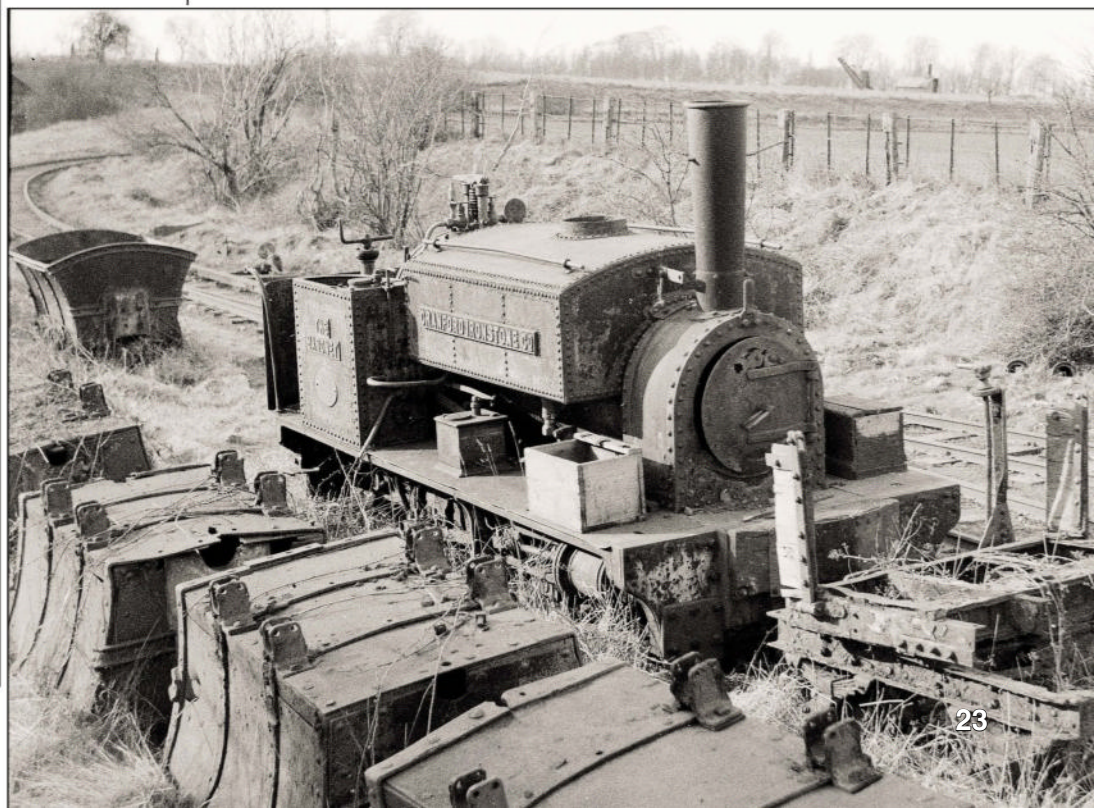
In the 1950s, quarrying continued to be extended towards Belvoir Castle, some three miles distant from the main-line tipping area, and so the line was lengthened, proceeding in the same general direction as the road to Knipton. The locos hauled trains of more than 21 tubs, each laden »

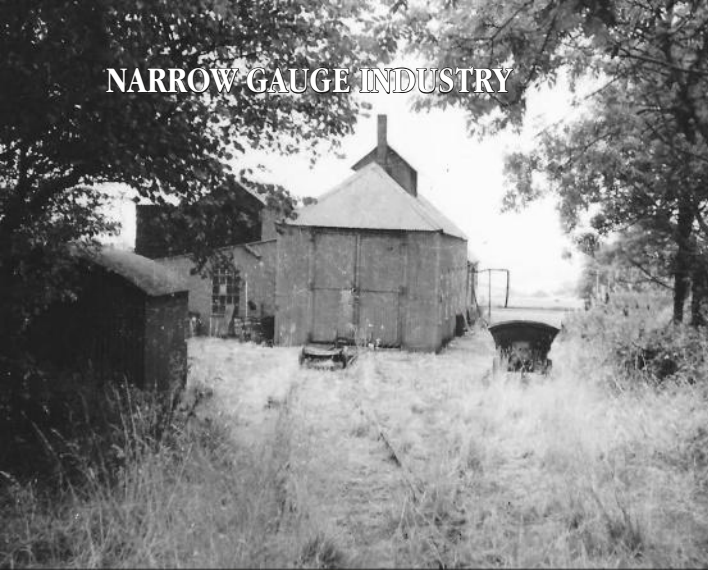


Above: 'Nantes', the first French-built loco to arrive at Waltham and well liked by its crew. Photo likely taken July 1949.

Right: Manning Wardle 0-4-2ST 'Dreadnought' on a passing loop, April 1957.

Below: The strictly functional 'The Baronet', rusting away in April 1958.





with 35 to 37 hundredweight of ore, totalling around 40 tons.

Today, the location of the line towards the High Lees, Grandby and Harts quarries has disappeared once again, under the well-tended agricultural fields until the point where it makes a sharp 90-degree turn towards Knipton. Here, the trackbed is still clearly discernible.

By 1958, even these quarries were worked out. The Waltham system outlived the Loddington line by only a few months and was claimed to be Britain's last metre gauge railway when it closed. Dreadnought and Cambrai were greased up and locked inside the engine shed. Nantes was still camped on the embankment and The Baronet left to rust further down the line.

In August 1959, track lifting began and by October 1960, now isolated and rusted up, the latter two locomotives were ignominiously broken up by the scrap merchant's torch. Dreadnought suffered the same fate in December 1960.

Lucky survivor

Nantes had been promised to the Narrow Gauge Museum at the

Tallylyn Railway, but it was too late to save it. So, the quarrying company instead offered Cambrai as it was only suffering slight weathering damage. Today, Cambrai is, in a red livery and black outline, on loan to the Irchester Narrow Gauge Museum, near Wellingborough – a former centre of ironstone quarrying. This loco was modelled in G Scale by LGB and the author has often wondered why the colour was changed from green to red.

I cannot be the only one who thrills to envisage long-vanished narrow gauge railway infrastructure. Indeed, it is amazing what one can discover if you look hard enough. The reinstatement of this three-mile long line across the Duke and Duchess of Rutland's land close to Belvoir Castle would make a delightful project, imposing little upon their farmland and bringing in tourist revenue. One can but dream!

David Joy adds: The Waltham Quarry Railway was one of the first two narrow gauge lines I ever visited. As a teenager back in September 1959, I was out of sorts with my parents for spending many months of

Above left: The surroundings of Waltham loco shed, rapidly succumbing to undergrowth in September 1959. Securely locked inside were Dreadnought and Cambrai. Photo: David Joy

Above: Nantes in September 1959. Although the loco was promised for preservation, it was scrapped in the following year. Photo: David Joy

Below: Cambrai on show at Irchester Narrow Gauge Museum, April 2022. Photo: Clive Hawley

Except where credited, photos courtesy Industrial Railway Society with grateful thanks to archivist Kevin Lane

savings on Eric Tonks' tome with its cover price of 45 shillings (about £60 in today's money).

Tucked within its 300-plus pages were enticing details of the Waltham system and the neighbouring 3ft gauge Eastwell line. The text sounded an ominous warning – time was running out for the few surviving narrow gauge systems in the ironstone industry and it seemed unlikely that they would continue much longer in their present state.

In those far-off leisurely days with no instant communication there was only one way a young school lad could be certain of the position – and that was somehow to get there! I had a bike, which could then be put on any train, and a map showed that they were only ten miles from Grantham station. So off I set from York, not having the remotest idea of what I would find. Locomotives could be in steam or scrap merchants could already have been and gone.

Ahead of the torch

It was a demanding uphill pedal from Grantham before finally reaching the ironstone quarries. There was no steam in action at either line but nor had the scrapmen arrived. At Waltham there was time to take a quick photograph of Nantes looking sorry for itself and peer through the shed windows at Dreadnought and Cambrai before rapidly cycling back to Grantham and catching the last train home.

Despite the initial disappointment, I was now totally hooked on narrow gauge railways, although sadly another 40 years were to elapse before I launched *NGW* in 1999.

The Eastwell line has featured in several issues of *NGW* and further coverage of its three preserved locomotives is in prospect. By contrast, the Waltham system has been somewhat neglected, as has the home of Cambrai at the Irchester Narrow Gauge Museum – a feature on this not so well-known museum starts on page 30. **NGW**



Action-packed farewell to summer

Locos still on their travels, others making comebacks – it's been a busy high season...



Above: Spot the train... *Ralph Ward* got up early on 31st August to capture a misty morning in the Banwy Valley and Franco-Belge 0-8-0T 'Sir Drefaldwyn' making its way with one of the first of the day's trains at the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway Gala.

Right: A week earlier on 24th August saw *Joey Evans* at the Bala Lake Railway's summer Gala, where yet another quarry Hunslet was visiting, Paul Lewin's 'Velinheli' – here double-heading with resident 'Maid Marian'.

Overleaf: The summer holiday that the Ffestiniog Railway's England 0-4-0ST 'Palmerston' has spent on the Vale of Rheidol Railway has certainly inspired several of our photographers – *Joey Evans* caught one of the final shots with this dramatic image taken on 15th September – soon after the loco was due to head to Devon for the Lynton & Barnstaple Gala and then back home for the Ffestiniog's Bygones Weekend at the start of October.



**NARROW
GAUGE
WORLD**







Above: *Andrew Simmonds* was suitably captivated by Palmerston too – especially as on 24th August he happened to be at the Rheidol's Devil's Bridge station in perfect late-afternoon conditions for this atmospheric shot.

Below: Big engines are in the news at present and it's easy to forget that the Vale of Rheidol has been running a big engine for a while now, in the form of the NGG13 Garratt 'Drakensberg'. *Joey Evans*, who appears to have joined the photographers becoming part-time pilots, captured the loco crossing the Rheidol river bridge on 26th August.





Above: The Gala at the Old Kiln Light Railway on 7th-8th September featured a visitor in the form of Kerr Stuart Wren 0-4-OST 'Peter Pan', but resident Orenstein & Koppel 'Elouise' grabbed its share of the limelight, here accelerating through the Surrey line's forestry scenery. *Photo: Phil Crook*

Below: And finally – the Welsh Highland Railway's newly restored NG15 'Kalahari' 2-8-2 NG134 tries to hide its sheer size through a wall of steam on its first day of movement on 11th September. We suspect we are going to be featuring this locomotive rather a lot next season... *Photo: Chris Parry/FF&WHR*



On the metre...

In the second of our ironstone railway features, *Phil Barnes* visits Irchester Narrow Gauge Museum, a lesser-known collection recalling an important aspect of the UK's industrial history.

The average enthusiast might be somewhat surprised, taking a stroll along a footpath in an East Midlands country park, to suddenly come upon one of the country's lesser-known railway museums – but the location of the Irchester Narrow Gauge Museum is highly appropriate.

The museum became a reality in 1987, when a purpose-built structure was erected in the Irchester Country Park, which can be found

about two miles to the south of the town of Wellingborough in Northamptonshire. The museum building and yard are located just to the west of a railway maintenance yard that existed when the site was an open-cast quarry, opened in 1872 and part of the extensive ironstone industry of the East Midlands. This industry was served by a network of lines mainly built to metre gauge and therefore today's museum is

"This industry was served by a network of lines mainly built to metre gauge..."

very much in the right place.

Quarrying at Irchester, in what was known as the Wembley Pit, ceased in 1941 but metre-gauge trains ran through the site for another 28 years, hauling ironstone from quarries at Lodge Pit and Wollaston to a standard-gauge connection at Little Irchester.

The line finally ceased operation in 1969, by which time much of the Irchester site had been allowed to revert to the wild and in 1971, the Northamptonshire County Council reopened the area as the Irchester Country Park. Today the park comprises maturing woodlands that were planted in about 1965 and grassy meadows with surrounding trails, while there is also a children's play area and a café.

As mentioned the museum was originally set up in 1987 to tell the story of the former local industry – the concept of the Irchester Narrow Gauge Railway Trust has always been to acquire and preserve narrow gauge artifacts that have been associated with the ironstone industry of Northamptonshire and the East Midlands.

Follow the path

The entry to the museum is not that obvious – access is via quite a long footpath, following the line of the former ironstone railway trackbed. The path starts at a gate near the





café and toilet block in the main car park – the museum itself doesn't have these facilities and in fact, it also doesn't have 'on grid' supplied electricity or water. This is dealt with ad-hoc by the volunteers on working or open days. With the museum at such a historically significant location, the lack of these facilities does not detract from what is on offer to visitors at this unusual and niche collection.

Irchester houses the largest collection of metre gauge locos and rolling stock in the UK, this being a very unusual gauge for railways in this country. Also on site are items relevant to 3ft, 2ft and 20in gauge railways, the collection totalling more than 40 major items.

Local trio

Core of the metre gauge collection are the three Peckett 0-6-0STs which formerly worked around five miles from Irchester at Finedon Quarry. No 85 (1870/1934) was purchased by Alan Bloom in 1986 for his new steam museum at Bressingham in Norfolk – he actually laid 150 yards of metre-gauge track on which to run the loco, then named 'Banshee'. But the building of a standard gauge demonstration line at Bressingham relegated No 85 to a static exhibit and in 1966 it moved to the Yorkshire Dales Railway before being sold to the Northamptonshire Locomotive Group in 1977. It was restored to working order between 1982 and 1984 in the goods shed at Irchester station before being moved to the new museum in 1987.

Sister loco no 86 (1871/1934)

which is currently under a long-term overhaul, was sold privately out of the former quarry in 1967 and passed to the Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway Trust in 1975, arriving at Irchester in 1991. The Trust also acquired the somewhat younger no 87 (2029/1942) in 1973 – it arrived at Irchester in 1993 and has been a static exhibit ever since, currently on display outside the museum building.

There is a fourth metre gauge steam loco with quite a history. Corpet 0-6-0T 'Cambrai' (493/1888) worked originally on the Chemins de Fer du Cambrésis in France until 1936 when its home line was closed and the loco bought by dealer Thos. W. Ward Ltd, which

Heading: Inside the Irchester Narrow Gauge Museum. Corpet 0-6-0T 'Cambrai' is to the rear while in front, on a wagon are parts from the currently under restoration former Finedon Quarry Peckett 0-6-0ST no 86. For a closer view of Cambrai, see page 24.

Facing page, below left: Peckett 0-6-0ST no 85, which also worked at Finedon, was originally sold to Alan Bloom with hopes of using it on the railway he built at Bressingham.

Above: The third of the Finedon Pecketts, no 87, has always been a static exhibit outside the museum building, with access to its cab for visitors. At left the gate is across the 250-yard long demonstration line, which boasts a significant gradient into the yard.

Below: Yes it's a semi-protected War Department Simplex, but this one is of 3ft gauge and currently lacking an engine.

All photos by Phil Barnes, August 2024





then sold it on to the Loddington ironstone quarry.

Cambrai worked at Loddington until 1956 and then at Waltham quarries until 1960, when it went on display at the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum established at the Tallyllyn Railway. With the Tallyllyn requiring space for station development, the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum Trust placed Cambrai on loan to Irchester and it moved to Northamptonshire.

The internal combustion (i/c) locos are of equal interest. The name of Hunslet 0-4-0DM 'The Rock' (2419/1941) gives clues to its former life working at HMS Rooke, a Naval dockyard at Gibraltar. 'Milford' is a 4wDM built by Ruston & Hornsby in 1941 (works no 211679) while fellow Ruston 'ED10, Edward Charles Hampton' (411322/1958) was formerly owned by British Railways.

A trio of 3ft gauge locos are also present – semi-armoured War Department Motor Rail 4wPM no.1363 of 1918 which currently has no engine, and a pair of Rustons, 4wDMF no.338439 of 1953 and a former Kilvington quarry 0-6-0DM (281290/1949) which is currently off site.

Narrower gauges

The collection of rolling stock includes plenty of interesting items including two more gauges – 20in gauge wagons and a rail-mounted winch from Ravensthorpe Reservoir, 20 miles from Irchester, and a 2ft gauge oak-framed wagon which forms part of a life-sized quarry diorama created within the museum building. More metre gauge stock includes a hand crane that came from Ravensthorpe's lumber mill and a gun cotton ammunition van from the RNAD at Milford Haven, while local rail history is further represented by the only surviving Wellingborough Iron Co flat wagon.

Several of the i/c locos are maintained in working order for a very good reason – adjacent to Peckett 87 is a gate that allows trains on to the 250-metre long demonstration track. This heads off in a north northeast direction and has a gradient of 1 in 36 as it comes into the compound! On the side of the yard there is a signal near the railway access gate and up towards the shed is a water tank with the inscription South Durham Steel & Iron Co Ltd Irchester Mines along its side; the water supply for this comes from the roof of the adjacent museum building.

Further artefacts on display, along with some excellent models of the



“Several locos are maintained in working order for a good reason – a 250-metre long demonstration track heads off in a north northeast direction and has a gradient of 1 in 36 as it comes into the compound...”





Facing page: The museum is about much more than locomotives and rolling stock. Artefacts from the area's industrial past, a full-size cameo representing iron ore quarrying, and some well-built models help to tell the story.

Above: Internal-combustion locos 'Milford' and 'ED10' are both Ruston & Hornsby products.

Below: The hand crane, also metre gauge, came from a lumber mill at Ravensthorpe Reservoir, 20 miles away.

Below right: The Royal Blue paintwork of 'The Rock' hints at its naval past, as does the loco's name. Behind the loco, even the water tank is a part of local industrial history.

Islip blast furnaces and of Little Irchester and the surrounding district, akin to a 3D map, serve to provide a comprehensive look into the area's industrial history.

Irchester Narrow Gauge Museum is primarily open on a Sunday – entry is free of charge but of course donations to help maintain the collection are most welcome. There is also a shop selling railway ephemera which will also help you 'part with your money'!

While none of the steam locomotives on site are currently active, the diesels can be seen in

action on the last Sunday of the month, when the railway's operation is demonstrated.

If you are in the area on a Sunday a visit is highly recommended. **NGW**

More Information

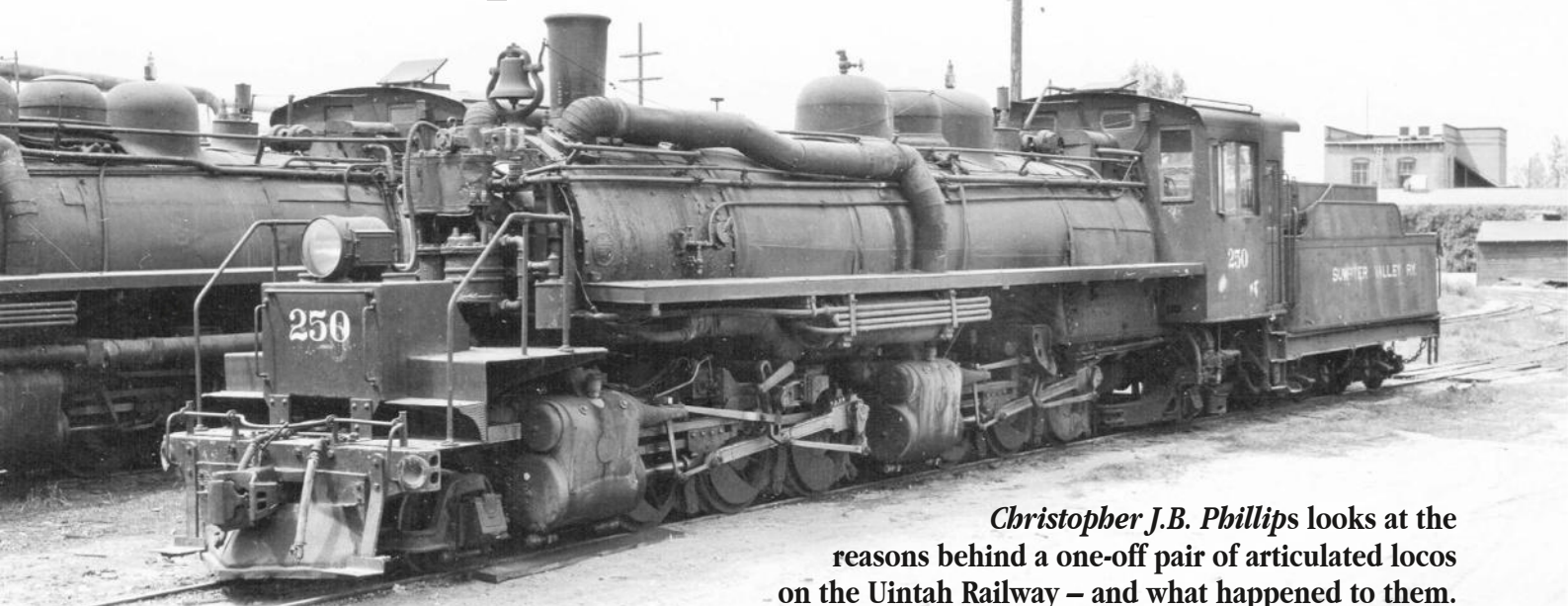
Further details of the museum, including opening times and an email address for enquiries are at www.irchesterrailwaymuseum.co.uk

Phil would like to thank Alex Adams for his help with information and proofing for this feature.

Additional reporting provided by Andrew Charman.



Two unique Mallets



Christopher J.B. Phillips looks at the reasons behind a one-off pair of articulated locos on the Uintah Railway – and what happened to them.

The Uintah Basin of north-eastern Utah was the site of extensive deposits of gilsonite, an asphaltic hydrocarbon used in the production of paint, varnish, flooring, roofing and electrical insulation. First discovered in 1869, it was developed commercially in the 1880s. The Uintah Railway was formed in 1903 by the Barber Asphalt Paving Company, creating a 19-mile 3ft-gauge line to the Basin from a junction with the Rio Grande Western at Mack – a place named after the president of the company.

Although one of the last narrow gauge lines built, it was beset with difficult geographic characteristics. The first three miles utilised an abandoned length of the Rio Grande Western track, and then climbed 28 miles to Atchee at the base of the Baxter Pass.

The section over the Pass was built to lumber railroad specifications and

included grades of 7.5 per cent and curves of over 60 per cent radius. The original 70 per cent curve at Moro Castle was later amended to 66 per cent. Descending to McAndrews the line continued along Evacuation Creek to Dragon.

Problems for locomotives

The section over Baxter Pass was intended to be negotiated by geared locomotives. Five Shays had been acquired by 1910, another in 1920 and a seventh in 1933. Six were two-truck Shays of Lima Locomotive Works construction while no 7 comprised parts of nos 1, 3 and 4 with a new Lima boiler. No 4 was purchased from the Argentine Central Railway in 1910, as was no 5.

The passenger service comprised a combine car hauled by a pair of 0-6-2 tank engines, both built by Baldwin and the only locomotives able to traverse the whole line. The mineral

Above: Following conversion to a tender locomotive no 51, renumbered to 250, is seen at South Baker yards on the Sumpter Valley Railway in May 1947 – the year that this 60-mile line closed. Photo: Richard Kindig

Below: No 51, the second and heaviest of the two Mallets in its original form. This model in G Scale on 45mm gauge track was produced by LGB. Photo: David Joy

traffic, either side of Baxter Pass, was handled by Baldwin 2-8-0s – no 10 was sold to the Eureka Nevada Railway in 1927. There were two carrying no 11, the first originally supplied to the Denver & Rio Grande, bought in 1904 and scrapped in 1911. The second was built in 1911 and scrapped in 1927.

No 12, constructed in 1896 for the Florence & Cripple Creek Railroad, was bought in 1917, reboilered in 1924, and sold in 1937 to the Eureka Nevada & Colorado Railway. It is now on display at the Nevada Southern Railroad Museum.

Baldwin 2-8-2 rod engines also worked either side of Baxter Pass. No 30, built in 1911, was scrapped in 1939. No 40, supplied to the New York & Bermudez in 1913 and sold to the Uintah in 1919, succumbed to the cutter's torch in 1939.

In 1908 the company started surveying an extension to the north, crossing White River, to Bonanza and Vernal, with the intention of tunnelling under Baxter Pass and converting to standard gauge. Three million dollars was raised from a bond issue, yet the track was laid to 3ft gauge, and extended only 9.6 miles down Evacuation Creek to Watson with a four-mile spur from Rainbow Junction to Rainbow.

Uintah Basin, a major source of the world's gilsonite, kept the railway profitable into the 1920s. But in 1921 in the face of declining passenger traffic, the service was reduced to three per week before in 1929 it returned to daily operation excluding Sundays.

In 1923, Lucian C Sprague was



hired initially as superintendent and subsequently as general manager. He believed that economies could be made by employing locomotives that could traverse the whole line. With the aid of his master mechanic, H S Shaffer, they presented a specification to the Baldwin Locomotive Works.

The result was a simple expansion Mallet articulated tank engine, 2-6+6-2, Uintah's no 50. It had a gross weight of 263,300lb and a length of 45ft 8in with 42in drivers, 15 x 22in cylinders and Walschaerts valve motion. It was so successful that a second engine no 51, slightly heavier by five tons, was delivered in 1928. In operation the side tanks were kept full to provide maximum weight over the drivers, water being taken from up to four water tanks drawn behind the locomotive.

By 1935 hard-surface highways had spread into the area, rail traffic declined and abandonment was applied for in August 1938, permission being granted in April of the following year. The last train ran on 16th May 1939 and the railway was dismantled between then and February 1940.

Fate of the Mallets

The two articulated locomotives were sold for \$20,000 to the Sumpter Valley Railway of Oregon, renumbered 250 and 251, had tenders added and were converted to oil burning. The tenders were obtained from 2-8-2s, no 250 receiving one from Sumpter Valley no 19 built by ALCO in 1920 and 251 another from a similar locomotive no 20. The side tanks were left on 250 whilst tests were undertaken to determine what weight was required over the drivers. Scrap rails were added to the side running boards to improve adhesion.



Above: No 250 was out of service in Guatemala in December 1964, but was specially cleaned and fired up to feature in the railroad's annual calendar.

Right: Head-on view of no 250 with the boiler overhang clearly evident as it negotiated some pointwork when posing for the calendar shot.

Below: No 251 was pictured in its final days at Esquintla in Guatemala, April 1963.

Uncredited photos by Gordon Glattenberg

The 2-6+6-2s continued to be used for basic motive power making a daily run, known as the 'Stump Dodger', until the 60-mile line closed in 1947. Both were then sold to the International Railways of Central America, owned by the US company United Fruit Co in Guatemala.

There were traction problems with these locomotives in Guatemala, both being withdrawn from service in the 1960s. No 251 became derelict whilst 250 was fired up in 1964 to be photographed for the railway's 1965 calendar. It was finally withdrawn in the 1970s to lie dismantled in the jungle at Esquintla.

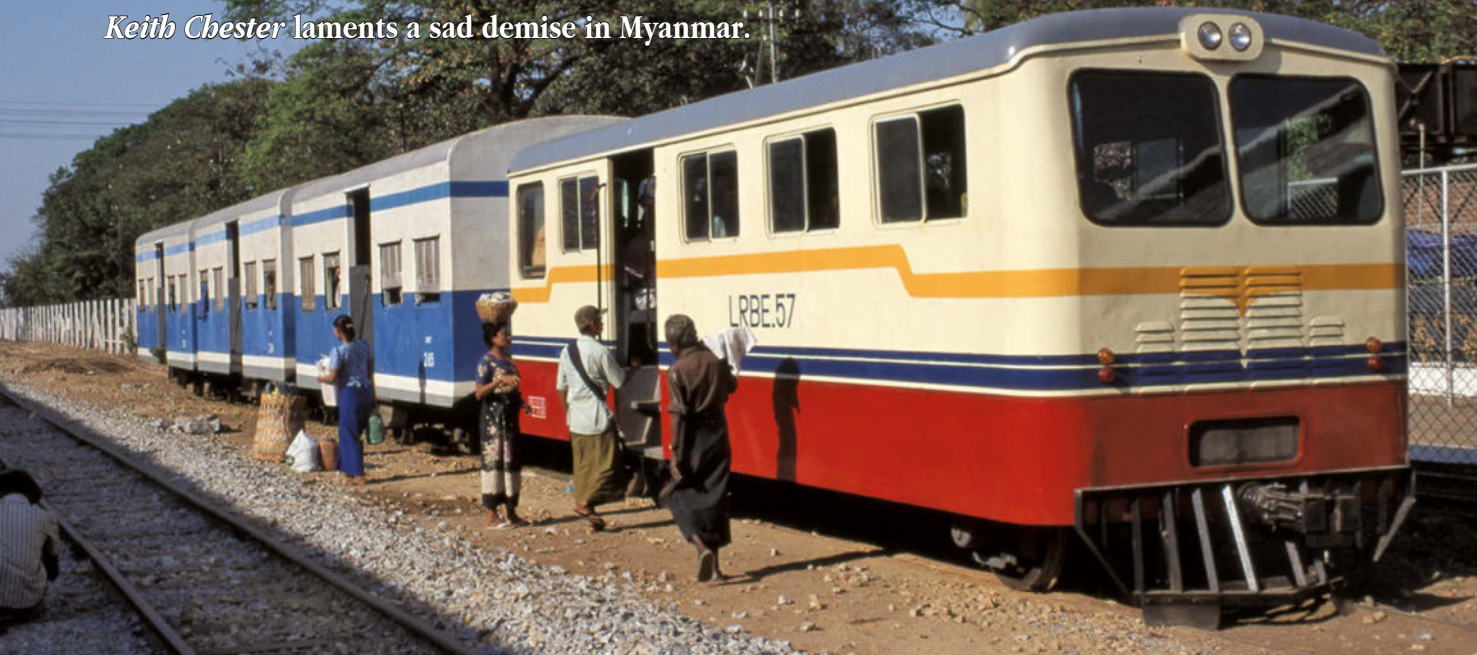
Nos 19 and 20 with their Baldwin tenders were sold to the White Pass & Yukon Railroad in January 1941. Confusingly, no 19 became no 81, and no 20 became no 80. They were both taken out of service in the 1960s, and came back to the Sumpter in 1977. In Guatemala the tenders from the 2-6+6-2s had found new employment as water tanks and in 1993 the Sumpter was able to acquire

the two tenders, reportedly for \$6,000 plus shipping. No 19 (81) has since been restored with its original tender and is in service, whilst no 20 (80) awaits restoration. **NGW**



Home-made Railbuses

Keith Chester laments a sad demise in Myanmar.



Burma was perhaps the richest country in Southeast Asia in the 1930s but when I visited in 1982 it was among the poorest in the region, its railways visibly creaking at the edges – I have an abiding memory of riding on a packed night train in an open bogie carriage lit by a single flickering candle. The corruption and incompetence of the often brutal military regimes in power since 1962 bear much of the responsibility.

As a consequence, there has been relatively little modernisation of

Burma's metre gauge railway system and much equipment dating from the British colonial era remains in use. However, the country, renamed Myanmar in 1989, began to embark on ambitious programmes of railway construction in the 1990s. This has sucked up much of the little investment capital available, resulting in a great deal of make do and mend on the part of the fundamentally under-resourced Myanmar Railways.

A talent for creative improvisation was exemplified by the home-made

"With each LRBE emerging from whatever was to hand and the ingenuity of its constructors, it is said that no two were identical..."

Photos: LRBE nos 57 (above), 22 (left) and 66 (below) – each distinctive in their design and livery, pictured in 2004. Photos: Frank Stenvall



railbuses introduced in the 1990s. These vehicles, designated LRBE (Light Rail Bus Engine), resulted from an inability to acquire sufficient numbers of diesel locos for secondary services on the new railways.

Road to rail

The LRBEs were built around the chassis of old lorries, usually Hinos from Japan. The rear axle was cut back to metre gauge and its wheels and rubber tyres retained, providing the drive for the new rail vehicle – the two outer axles were unpowered.

The bodywork was assembled from parts of withdrawn locos and carriages. With each LRBE emerging from whatever was to hand and the ingenuity of its constructors, it is said that no two were identical. As such they attracted the attention of enthusiasts and acquired something of a cult following.

In all 78 LRBEs were put into service between 1995 and 2003. Short rakes of simple four-wheel carriages were often attached to the railbuses but reputedly overtaxed the motors of the LRBEs and to have hastened their demise. They plugged a gap but were quickly replaced when sturdier, secondhand railcars began to arrive from Japan. By 2014 only 14 were still at work and all are believed to have been since withdrawn. **NGW**

More Information

Stenvalls has just published *Railways of Burma/Myanmar* by Dieter Hettler, a well-illustrated book on the fascinating railways of this troubled country. It is priced at £32 plus post direct from www.stenvalls.com



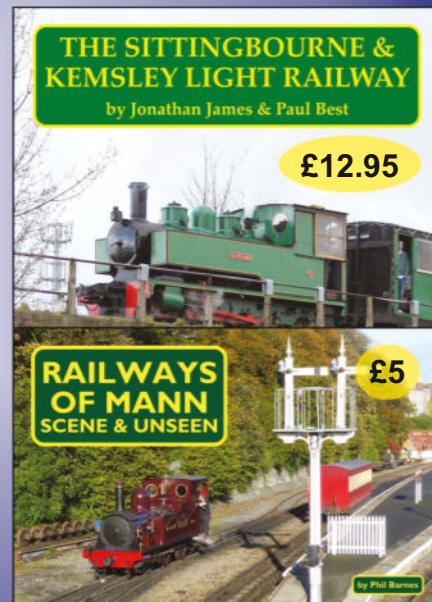
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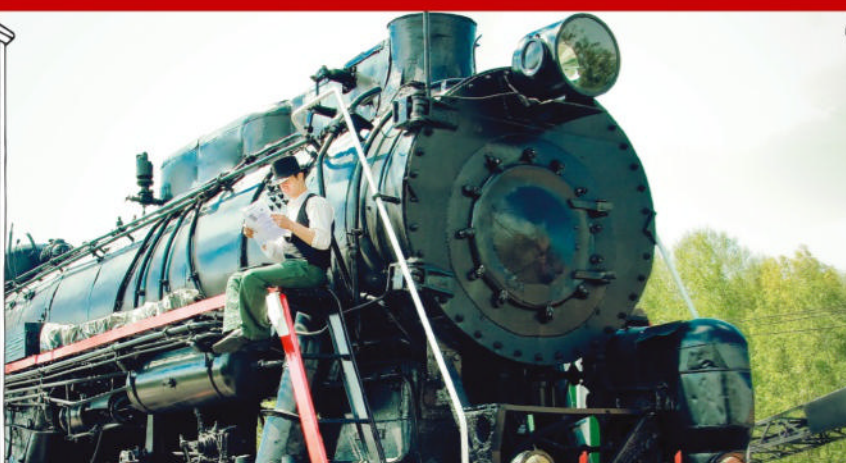
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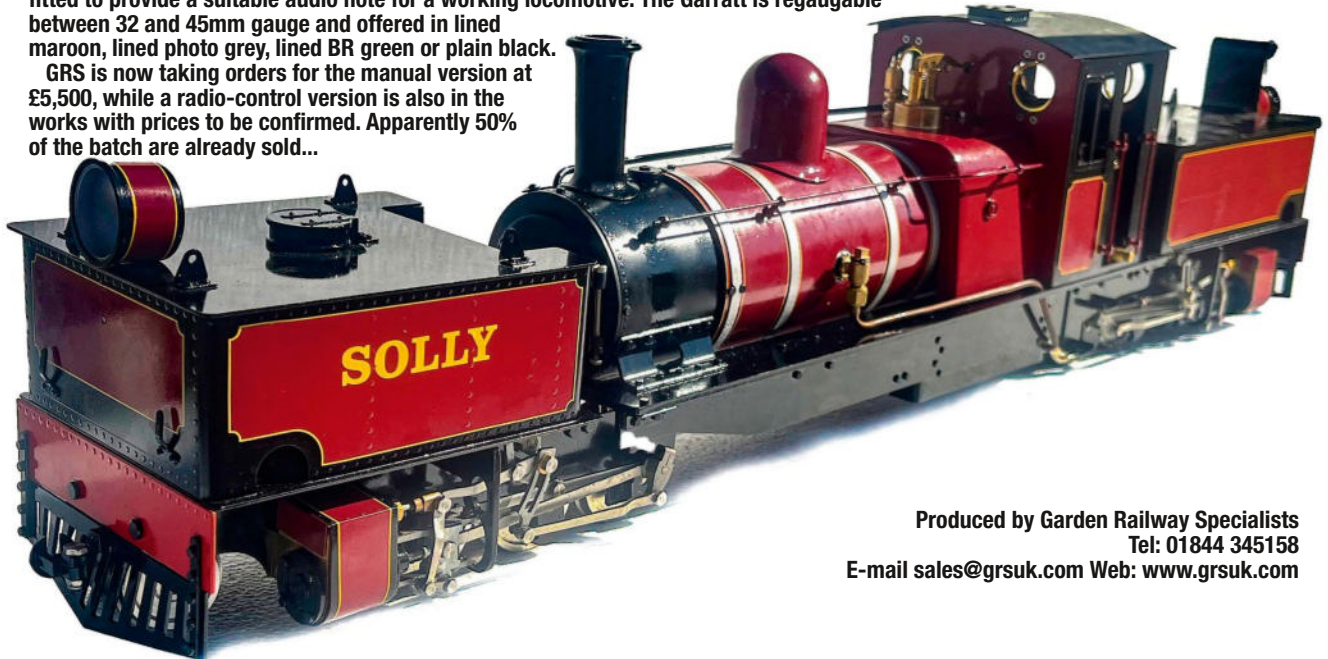
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■ Garden Railway Specialists has unveiled the latest 16mm scale live-steam model built for it by Bowande in China, choosing as its prototype the NGG11 Garratt, the first of the type to run in South Africa, initially on the Avontuur route. NG52, the subject of the model, later worked at the Rustenberg platinum mines before being preserved, and today runs at the Sandstone Steam Trust.

The model is to typical GRS standards, with Walschaerts motion and two poker burners feeding the boiler. A displacement lubricator and water gauge are fitted, and the detail includes working suspension and a removable cab roof. A 'chuff pipe' is also fitted to provide a suitable audio note for a working locomotive. The Garratt is regaugable between 32 and 45mm gauge and offered in lined maroon, lined photo grey, lined BR green or plain black.

GRS is now taking orders for the manual version at £5,500, while a radio-control version is also in the works with prices to be confirmed. Apparently 50% of the batch are already sold...



Produced by Garden Railway Specialists

Tel: 01844 345158

E-mail sales@grsuk.com Web: www.grsuk.com

MODEL LINES

Port Wynnstay calls it a day

Port Wynnstay Models, known for its 7mm narrow gauge items particularly of Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway prototypes, has closed. Paul Martin of EDM Models, who hosted the Port Wynnstay range on his NG Trains website, told *NGW* that Port Wynnstay owner Phil Traxson has decided it's time to retire.

"Phil took on Port Wynnstay Models in 1996, re-opening it in 1997 and slowly increased the range of models available, but having reached his 77th birthday he has decided to call it a day and get on with the layouts he's building and doing some modelling for himself," Paul added.

At the time of writing the 7mm Narrow Gauge FR & WHR stock, along with the standard gauge range, have found a new home with Andrew Corser at 422 modelmaking. "There will be an intermission whilst production moves

from Porthmadog to East Yorkshire. I am sure Andrew will publicise when the items are available again."

National show in November

Plenty of narrow gauge will be on offer at the National Festival of Railway Modelling at the NEC Birmingham on 23rd-24th November, successor to the Warley National and now organised by *NGW* publisher Warners. We will have more on this event next month.

Midlands ME show this month

The Midlands Model Engineering Show, which always includes a strong narrow gauge element among its many large-scale models, will take place this year between 17th and 20th October at its usual venue of the Warwickshire Event Centre, close to Leamington Spa. Full details of the event and ticket-booking

facilities are on the website, www.midlandsmodelengineering.co.uk

Organiser Meridienne Events has also announced the dates of its 2025 Garden Rail Show, again at the Warwickshire Event Centre and focusing on the 'garden scales', of which the narrow gauge 16mm and G-scale are the most popular. The show is on 1st-2nd March.





Talybont Tales – best-laid plans...

The *NGW* Project Layout returns, with our editor being inspired to make some changes...

Model railways are not simply tracks on a board; they are living, breathing things, and they can evolve – and change...

Regular readers of *NGW* will recall our project layout in 009 scale, started in mid 2023 and its construction featuring in several issues of the magazine – until early this year, when things seemed to come to a grinding halt...

The editor can take full blame for this, or at least blame his working life which when not editing this magazine involves motoring journalism, writing about cars, which I've been doing for the best part of 30 years.

Earlier this year an opportunity arose in my 'other job' which I snapped up, perhaps

not quite realising just how involving and time-heavy it would be. Basically I've been hanging on grimly through the summer – only now are things starting to calm down to the point where I can again turn to my 4ft x 2½ft of model railway gathering dust in a corner of the office.

A break can be a good thing in fact, because it enables you to look at a project with fresh eyes, and make some changes...

So first to recap. The layout was conceived originally because your editor was in the happy position of regularly receiving some of the recent explosion in new ready-to-run 009 models for review and having to persuade friends with layouts to run them for me. So I came up with a

compact design which had a continuous run on the lower level and a fairly stiff climb (in fact stiffer than intended due to miscalculations with my measuring equipment) to an upper display level.

Here I had decided on the concept of a railway museum set up by enthusiasts in the redundant buildings of a Welsh slate quarry, inspired by the Gloddfa Ganol museum that existed for some years in the former (and these days active again) Oakley quarry at Blaenau Ffestiniog.

I was also inspired by a quite remarkable layout called 'Museum of Transport', created by Robin Brogden and which I'd seen at several model railway shows. It had so much going on but I especially liked the



buildings with lift-off roofs showing the museum interior – a smaller-scale concept would give me an excuse to display the collection of locos and stock I was rapidly building up.

Construction went well and I duly invested in some of the superb resin Welsh slate buildings produced by Bachmann – a slate processing house, seemingly perfect for my main museum building, and the loco shed. Which is where I hit my first problem – I thought before buying these structures that they were kits, and I could incorporate lift-off roofs, but they are not only ready-built but exquisitely painted – the thought of trying to carefully slice the roof with a Dremel seemed like sacrilege. So I wasn't sure what to do next.

Cutting edge

And then along came Peco with its new range of laser-cut kits, one of which I review over the page. They include the old slate loco shed at Boston Lodge, with plenty of internal detail and a roof that can easily be made to lift off to view what's within – and you can join two of the sheds together to make a longer building...

So it's all change, and the trackwork on my quarry level is currently being replanned to suit the Peco kits – but what, you may ask, about the Bachmann buildings, much too good to abandon?

I have managed to repurpose them. My display includes a quarry floor level, and an upper level, and this will now be widened to allow the loco shed and slate processing building to be resited on it. In truth this more accurately reflects prototype practice. In the Welsh quarries the raw slate slabs were typically cut and shaped into tiles in buildings on the working levels and the finished product then sent down the inclines, to be gathered in the yard for dispatch down the main line.

So that's basically where we are currently, and the readers that have been following this on-off project can rest assured that this winter will see some more updates as I press ahead. Step one, build a couple of loco sheds – watch this space...

1. A small corner of 'Museum of Transport', the remarkable layout that sparked the concept of the visible section of the *NGW* project layout.

2. Peco's new Boston Lodge loco shed really suits the bill for what is needed on the layout.

3. How it was going to be – the Bachmann slate processing building in its planned position. It's a truly excellent model, but you can't get the roof off...

4. How it's going to be – figuring out the space the new shed will take up.

5. The Bachmann buildings will find a new purpose, on an upper level that will be extended to suit them – it's a good thing foam board is cheap...





Making a fine cut...

Andrew Charman builds one of the new laser-cut wood Ffestiniog Railway structures now being offered in 009 scale by Peco.

Last month we revealed the new series of Laser-cut wood kits in 4mm to the foot 009 scale from Peco, all of Ffestiniog Railway structures. There are currently three in the range, comprising the wooden station building at Tan-y-Bwlch, the old slate locomotive shed at Boston Lodge and the more recent corrugated iron extension added alongside the original.

Peco was kind enough to send us examples of all three kits and we chose the

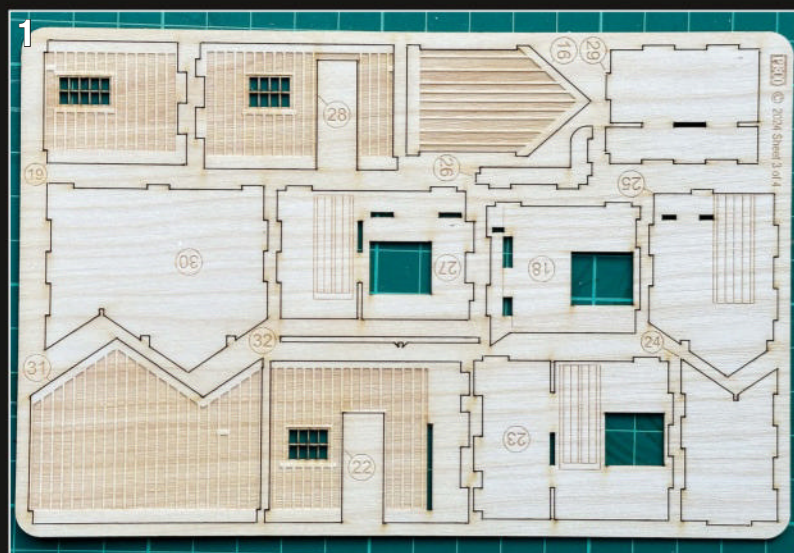
Tan-y-Bwlch model to build first and review. The kits are immediately appealing as they carry a significant cost advantage over other ready-built resin structures that are available in the scale, though it must be said that with their hand painting the ready-builts are superb models.

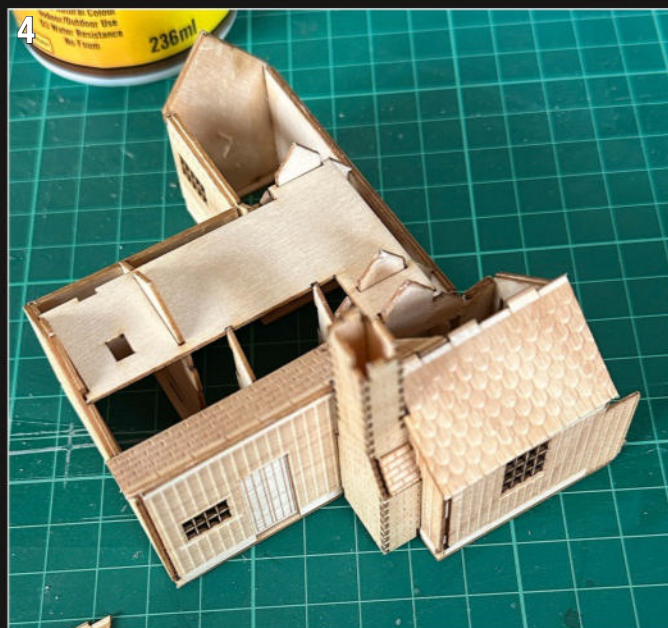
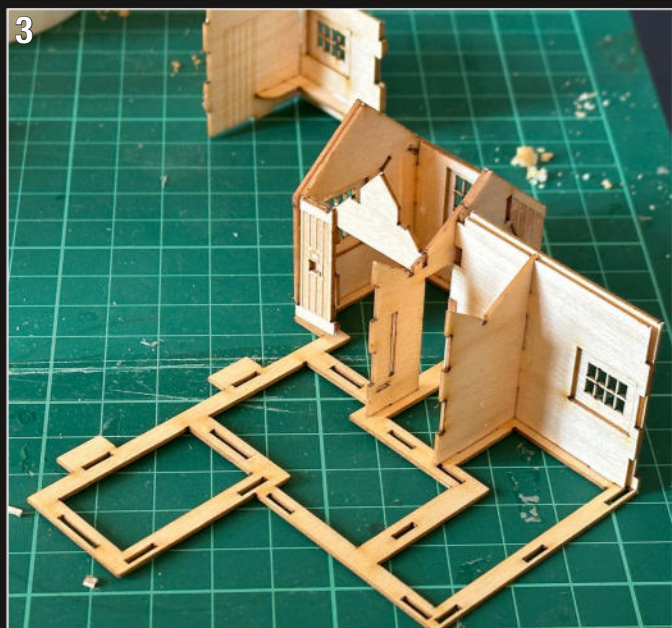
As the picture shows on opening the Peco package one is presented with a series of sheets of wood that have been laser cut to a very fine standard – the level of detail

in such aspects as the wood planking and the roof slating makes an immediate impression that does not go away as one builds the model.

Thin slices

Your editor is used to making laser-cut kits, but in the much larger garden scales and with much thicker sheets – the ones in this kit are very thin indeed, no thicker than card, as they should be in this scale, but it





does mean they require delicate handling to avoid any breakages.

The instructions advise gently cutting the parts out with a sharp knife but in all honesty all but the smallest parts press out, some almost falling off the sheet after which any remaining pips can be gently removed with a file or fine sandpaper.

Peco states any general-purpose glue can be used and I used a PVA wood adhesive. But I learnt the hard way that it is essential to have a dry run before gluing any parts together. The walls all come in two parts which are laminated together, and it is crucial that they are accurately positioned to correctly create the interlocking edges between sections. The problem is that the instructions are not very clear in this aspect – it's important to work it out for oneself and avoid unsightly gaps at the corners.

Solid base

Generally, however, the kit goes together very well and two aspects I particularly liked. Firstly a base frame is supplied with

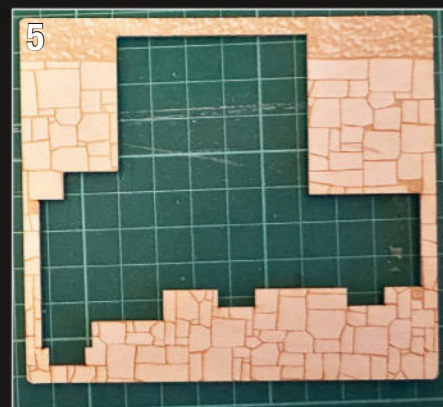
slots in which lugs on each section of wall fit, making it very easy to put the basic structure together nice and square.

Once your building is complete, the frame with the structure on it then neatly slots into its own base which provides a very neat surrounding area of paving which looks rather good.

Once the model is built, careful painting will be essential to ensure one does not obscure all the very fine detail which so raises the level of this building, so much more effective than printed papers and the like which were once the norm in such scales. We haven't painted ours yet so we've provided a photo of the Peco example.

To summarise, in our opinion these are not kits for the complete beginner, though more accurate guidance in the instructions as to exactly where to mate the laminated sections would help matters.

With careful effort, however, one can soon make up a very effective building at an inexpensive price – and it's worth mentioning too that the kit also comes



with a delightful extra in the form of a traditional Ffestiniog Railway signal.

We are glad we built this one first as we will know what to expect with the rather more complex loco shed kit – and as stated on the previous spread we have some definite plans for that one... **NGW**

Produced by Peco Tel: 01297 626204
E-mail: info@peco.co Web: www.peco-uk.com
Price Station building £17.95, stone loco shed £29.95, corrugated shed £19.95

Heading picture: The kit once opened – very fine detail is evident and note the signal that is also included.

1. Each sheet is thin but parts are well laid-out and numbered.

2. Each wall is in two pieces to laminate together – placing needs to be accurate.

3. Neat frame makes assembly a simple process.

4. Roof sections boast neatly cut signature rounded slates.

5. You even get the path around the building.

6. Careful painting is essential as on this example by Peco.

Photos by Andrew Charman



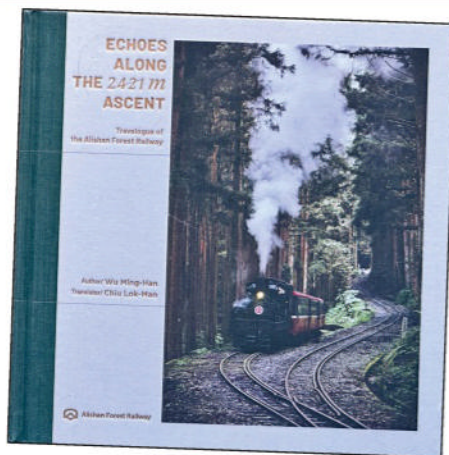
Echoes Along the 2421m Ascent Wu Ming-Han

■ Readers browsing recent issues of *NGW* cannot have failed to be aware of our appreciation for the Alishan Forest Railway in Taiwan – with its steep gradients, spiral tunnels and yes, Shay locomotives it is as remarkable a feat of civil engineering as the Darjeeling or any other narrow gauge route past or present. Now, to celebrate its full reopening following years of reconstruction caused by typhoon damage, the 2ft 6in gauge line has a descriptive guide that is remarkable in its own way, quite unlike what we are used to in terms of such publications.

Author Wu Ming-Han, or Albert Wu as he is known to his many British friends, having provided much help on matters Alishan to *NGW* among others, admits at the start of the book that he was not a railway enthusiast when he first encountered the Alishan – and that is perhaps what makes this book so different and special as a result. You get a little history, but the majority of the title is a travelogue, taking a journey up the line and describing the route – not in the dry terms that can be all too familiar of rail works but instead painting a picture of the environment, the challenges and most importantly the people who live along this line.

Reading the text you can easily imagine being there, but what really drives the impression home are the photos, hundreds of them and of the highest quality, again focusing as much on the Alishan's place in its environment as the line itself.

There are very few railway books that can find a home on the coffee table, but this is one of those rare titles that you can imagine being picked up and enjoyed by those with no interest in railways whatsoever – highly recommended. *AC*



ISBN: 978-6-26745-428-2

While the book is not generally available in the UK the editorial team has set up an ordering platform providing overseas shipping services at <https://railnews.tw/2421m>. As a guide the Taiwan price equates to around £30 plus shipping.



Statfold Barn Railway Summer Gala 2024 (DVD)

■ The weather was decidedly damp for at least the early part of Statfold's Summer Gala this year but that did not stop Michael Field producing another hour-long DVD with plenty of action. Not that subjects of interest were hard to find with some 15 locos in steam – two on them on the 12¼-inch gauge Mease Valley Railway including the brand-new Exmoor Steam Railway built 'Carol Ann'.

As is typical with MFVP product all aspects of the event are covered, and there is also a quick tour through the Roundhouse Museum in which another 19 locos were on display... All are accompanied by informative commentary.

Highlights include footage of Bagnall 0-4-OST 'Sir Tom' visiting from Threlkeld Museum in Cumbria and for this reviewer the 18-inch gauge former Woolwich Arsenal Hunslet diesel 'Carnegie' in action for the first time since 1998 when it last ran at Bilton Gardens in Devon, where I rode behind it as a child in the 1970s.

We at *NGW* have constantly extolled the virtues of Statfold and if there's anyone out there remaining to be convinced, this video will do the job... *AC*

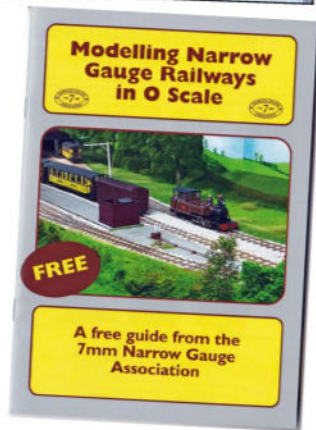
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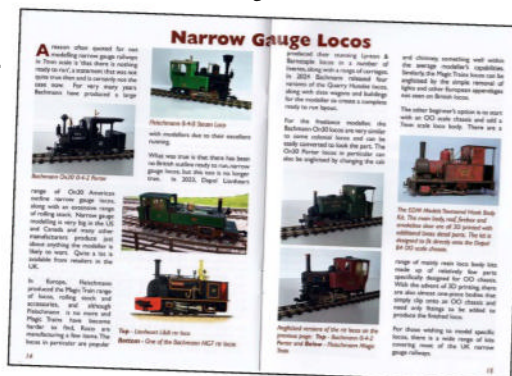
Modelling Narrow Gauge Railways in O Scale 7mm NGA

■ Narrow gauge in 7mm scale is on the up at present, a major reason being the release of ready-to-run stock by Bachmann, and now we have a timely release by the long-established 7mm Narrow Gauge Association – a definite must-join for anyone working in this scale by the way.

The A5 booklet runs to just 20 pages but squeezes in enough information on scales and gauges, layouts (including a gallery of pictures to inspire), track and stock to point any novice in the scale in the right direction – and it's free to get hold of! *AC*



Published by the 7mm Narrow Gauge Association. Hard copies available from Association stand at exhibitions or by sending a C5-sized SAE to 7mmNGA Publications, 5 Link Hill, Storrington, Pulborough, RH20 4LS. Digital copies can be downloaded from the website, <https://7mmnga.org.uk/modelling-narrow-gauge.php>



■ **Christmas Alert! We want your cards and calendars!** If you have such for sale this year we need details by 9th October latest, to feature in our November-December issue that publishes on 25th October. Ensure your railway's sales department knows of this publicity opportunity – our contact details are on page 3.



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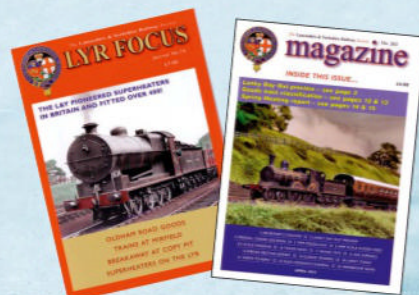
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VIEWPOINT

Thessaly memories

I was really pleased to read the article in *NGW* 187 by Keith Chester on his retrieved slides of the Thessaly Railway (in Greece) taken in 1972. I also visited this line in 1973 and 1974 and managed to see a few workings, although by the date only one a day for steam locos was the norm.

At Volos station depot, redundant and dumped locomotives littered the yard, including unusual secondhand rack locomotives from the Brunigbahn in Switzerland. Whilst the rack equipment had been removed, the locos still carried their old fleet numbers.

The Jung locomotives were built for the line as Second World War reparations, and resembled in my eyes a scaled-down version of the DR 64 class. An earlier batch had been built by Krupp in the 1930s but by the 1970s these were out of use. One of the Jung locomotives now remains, which could be restorable, but the whole line out to Kalambaka has now been converted to standard gauge, and connected to the mail line through Larissa. A museum now remains at Volos.

To me the attraction of the Thessaly system was that unlike most narrow gauge operations it retained side buffers rather than a central buffering layout – this was rare. I believe the metre-gauge system based around Osijek in former Yugoslavia also operated with side buffers.

I believe an amazing 0-12-0T from this system has been saved; the lines closed in 1970, but I saw evidence of tracks at wayside stations near Osijek in the summer of 1973.

Bob Brown

Reverse Engineering

I'm writing to rise to the implied challenge at the end of Keith Chester's 'Lost and Found' article right at the back of *NGW* 187, when he wonders if the process of reversing an entire train into a station was unique to Palaiofarsalos in Greece, where he encountered it.

This was the standard practice at Dorchester South on the standard gauge LSWR/Southern main line to Weymouth for more than 100 years between 1857 and 1970. The station was originally a terminus after the Southampton and Dorchester Railway reached it in 1847, with a single straight platform.

By 1857 the Great Western had also reached Dorchester and the South Western had separately decided to extend its proposed main line to Exeter from Salisbury rather than Dorchester, so the LSWR swung its line southwards from a point just east of its station, to join the GWR at

"Both also stopped at a 'boarding point' on the 'main' line beside the works in a way which the current FR staff might find alarming..."



Above right and below: Health and safety anyone? A 150th anniversary tour in 1986 provided a very close-up view of the Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge Works, and a useful sketch map was provided to visitors, as described in the letter from David Gulliver.

Dorchester Junction, and then share running powers to Weymouth from there. This needed a new platform for its down trains, which was duly built, but the old terminal platform for the up eastbound trains for Bournemouth, Southampton or Waterloo was left where it was.

On numerous occasions as a boy I watched the subsequent manoeuvre whereby up trains from Weymouth would run through the station, pull up while points and signals were changed, and then carefully reverse into the up platform, controlled by the guard with a flag from his van and also station staff. After setting down and picking up, away it would go again towards the capital.

This process was thoroughly time-consuming and inefficient, and therefore too good to last, so from 1970 the station was rationalised with a new curved up platform and buildings built, a car park area created behind them and the rest of the former site sold off to the adjoining local brewery for redevelopment. *Sic transit gloria mundi*, but it did make

for a fascinating railway cameo in its heyday.

Philip Williams

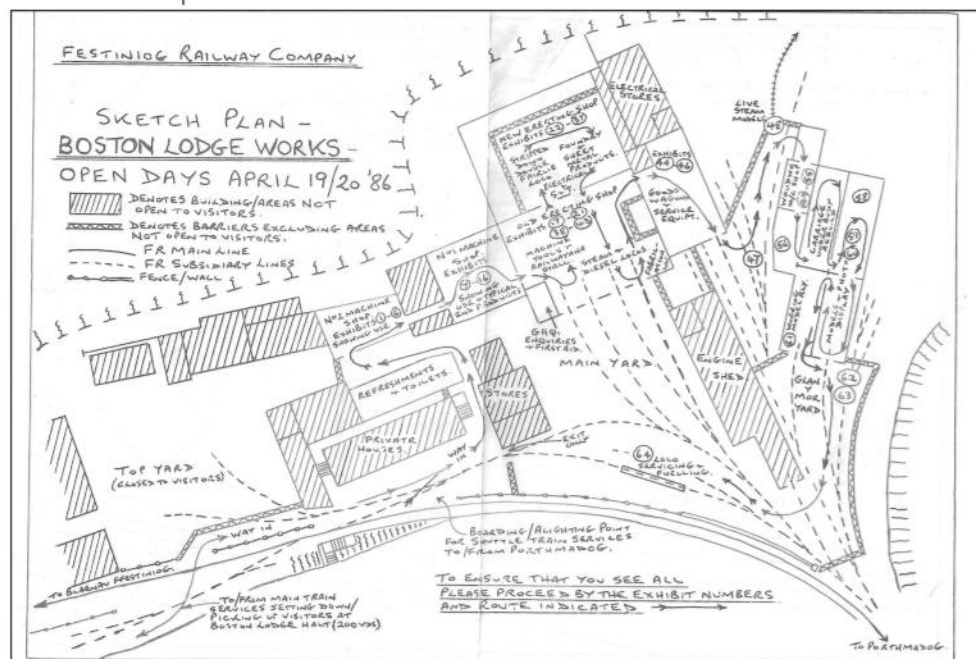
Andrew C replies: We will of course allow standard gauge in the pages of NGW when it's as interesting as Philip's letter reveals – prototype for everything!

Rainy day at the Lodge

I was particularly interested to read your account of the new public tours of Boston Lodge in the September *NGW*. I thought of another, very different, occasion on which I was able to visit the Festiniog Railway's works, nearly 40 years ago.

On Saturday 19th April 1986 my son and I travelled, with many others, on a special excursion train from Leeds to Blaenau Ffestiniog. At Blaenau the 12.20 departure was reserved for us (as was the 16.20 from Porthmadog). The weekend's events marked the 150th anniversary of the Ffestiniog Railway with both 'Boston Lodge Works' and the 'Engineers Depot – Minffordd' open to visitors.

On arrival at Blaenau the mountains were seen to be dusted



with snow and very cold rain continued for most of the afternoon. Unfortunately, we would have only about three hours to sample the many available attractions so we limited ourselves to Boston Lodge which afforded shelter from the rain, but precious little respite in the cold.

Visitors were provided with a detailed route plan which wove its way around the works, and a brochure describing the works and warning of the hazards to be avoided, such as 'crawling beneath' a loco.

There was almost too much to see but I was especially pleased to take a close look at the body of van no 10, five years before its restoration was completed, as I was making a model of it at the time.

The many models on show included a superb large-scale Penrhyn loco, 'Charles' while a railwayana stall was another magnet. I came away with a fragment of early Ffestiniog rail and a very small piece of a coach! It carries the number 6 in gold and I believe comes from the Bug Box, now numbered 2 (I would be pleased to find out if I am correct).

All trains stopped at Boston Lodge Halt including a 'Vintage' train drawn by 'Prince' which ran between Porthmadog to Minffordd. It and a shuttle from Porthmadog to the works both also stopped at a 'boarding point' on the 'main' line beside the works in a way which the current FR staff might find alarming!

All too soon it was time to catch one of these shuttle trains to Porthmadog, before boarding the 16.20 train to Blaenau Ffestiniog.

David Gulliver

Correze images anyone?

I have received a message from a French friend, Jacques Maligne, who authored the first 'proper' history of the Tramways de la Correze – a delightful system that finally succumbed in 1958/59. He has asked if I know of any Brits who visited the line in its final years and took photos.

Jacques has listed J B Snell, Derek Trevor Rowe, Lance King, D D Beattie and R C Hyde, but obviously some of those are no longer with us.

I was wondering if, through the readership of *NGW*, there may be others? Perhaps a mention in your editorial may pull a few names and contact numbers out of the clouds?

Chris Baldwin

Andrew C replies: An interesting request regarding this metre-gauge line from Chris, who I know as a former fellow volunteer at the Welshpool & Llanfair – if anyone can help please contact the editorial address and we'll pass any information on.

From a different age...

Our picture on this page last month of the now Amberley museum-based Guinness Brewery locomotive 'in steam' encouraged **Michael Bishop** to send in this fascinating picture of when it first arrived at Brockham Museum in 1967 – the 1ft 10in gauge loco is there, in its 5ft 3in gauge 'runner wagon' and hidden by the component parts of the transfer hoist!

"I don't think we ever got round to assembling the hoist," recalled Michael, who having been treasurer of the Museum Trust until work commitments took him to the West Country also recalled that Guinness had generously paid for the loco's transport.

Also in the picture is Michael's 1937 Talbot Sports Saloon (which apparently still exists). He appeared to favour 30-year old cars at the time, the Talbot's predecessor being a 1934 Austin 7 which apparently had bald tyres and a completely shot 6-volt battery, but thankfully also a starting handle at the front...

More on Brockham – page 48

■ Regular *NGW* correspondent Keith Chester hesitated about sending in a photo he found of the Leighton Buzzard Railway's early years at Pages Park as he thought it was of questionable quality. Well historical interest always outweighs technical quality but it's not that bad Keith! All he can remember is that this shot was taken in June 1972, which was four years after regular passenger services began.



YouTube Watch: online NG films

The online video site YouTube, which encourages users to upload their own clips, is a great source of narrow gauge items. If you've seen a clip that our readers would enjoy, why not send in the link?



■ The laudable efforts in recent months by the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway to improve its communication have included the launch of a new YouTube series, dubbed *Steam on the Moors*. There have been six episodes so far, varying from trials with various types of fuel to a look round the excellent ongoing restoration efforts at Chelfham, with the most recent featuring the launch and dedication of newly named Bagnall locomotive 'Sir George Newnes'. Each episode is around four to five minutes long and very well produced, definitely worth subscribing to if you are a regular YouTube user. bit.ly/3Zm54UD

That was the year that...

Narrow gauge news stories from the archives and their legacy...



From 60 years ago Brockham Museum to close?

At a recent meeting of the museum I put forward the suggestion (*wrote John Townsend*) that it was completely impractical to continue the work of building up a narrow gauge museum at Brockham, and that in the light of three years' experience we should consider that what has been done in these circumstances is remarkable, but that no fruitful future was foreseeable.

We are faced with two alternatives (a) to close the museum... or (b) drastically alter its present structure and organisation... The committee are obviously very reluctant to recommend the former to the Society as it will mean the loss of all the relics as well as ensuring the scrapping of many items which we had hoped to obtain...

Until now the museum has been organised by the younger members of our Society. This is to be expected and is a feature of most bodies of this type, but a stage in expansion has been reached when these younger members, of which I am one, have neither the knowledge, experience or authority to know the best ways to tackle the future. Enthusiasm alone is not enough... Unless we see the museum ultimately becoming something akin to the tramway museum at Crich, and on that scale of activity, then it will never become more than a backyard fad. Brockham could become a unique museum fulfilling a useful purpose in the documentation of Britain's industrial history or it could, and will unless something drastic happens, be a picking ground for scrap merchants. (NGN, Oct 1964)

John Townsend continued by inviting members of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society, which had set up the Brockham Museum in a Surrey chalk pit, to an informal meeting on its future, warning that without support at this meeting the museum would close by the end of the year. His bleak tone clearly worked, because as described in our 'Pioneers on the Pilgrims Way' series in NGW109-111, the museum would spend the best part of another two decades at Brockham.

In hindsight, and as the two pictures on this page by the late Dave Billmore clearly show, the pioneer enthusiasts at Brockham achieved a great deal in what was a very challenging working environment, especially in terms of access to the museum. This 1963 wake-up call can today be regarded as helping to create what is a very fine narrow gauge railway museum that we can enjoy at Brockham's successor location of Amberley in Sussex.



Extracts from *Narrow Gauge News*, the news journal of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society – for more details of the Society and how to join up, go to www.ngrs.org.uk or see the advert on page 45.



Diary & Special Events

■ No responsibility can be accepted for dates on these pages and anyone planning a visit for a ride or to an event should check the line's website and/or social media feeds for the latest update before travelling. Not all trains operate over full lines.

Special Events in October

Only events of interest to rail enthusiasts are included in this guide.

■ **Weekends, 29th-31st, Devon Railway Centre Open Day**
Museum nr Tiverton, 2ft gauge line. <http://devonrailwaycentre.co.uk>

■ **4th-6th Oct, Ffestiniog Railway Bygones Weekend**; Victorian train sets, freight and gravity trains, historical re-enactors.

■ **12th-13th Oct, Apedale Valley Railway War Office Hunslet Running Weekend**; All trains with WD 4-6-OT 1215 of 1916.

■ **19th Oct, Apedale Valley Railway New Members Day**; Behind the scenes, highlighting volunteering opportunities.

■ **20th Oct, Amberley Museum Autumn Industrial Trains**; Various locos operating, freight workings.

■ **26th-27th Oct, Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway Autumn Gala**; Intensive service, special train sets, double-heading

■ **27th Oct, Gartell Light Railway Open Day**; 2ft Somerset line, frequent timetable. 01963 370752, <http://newglr.weebly.com>



A Victorian theme is the overriding concern on the Ffestiniog Railway in early October. *Photo: Andrew Charman*

Tramways

- **Douglas Horse Tramway** www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/
Daily services in October except Mondays, Tuesdays.
- **Great Orme Tramway**: Conwy 01492 577877, www.greatormetramway.co.uk
Open daily between 10am and 6pm
- **Manx Electric Railway, Snafell Mountain Railway**:
Isle of Man, 01624 662525, www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/
Daily services in October except Mondays
- **Seaton Tramway**: Devon 01297 20375, www.tram.co.uk
Daily services from 10am

Miniature Railways

- **Audley End Railway** (10.25in): Essex 01799 541354, www.audley-end-railway.co.uk 1st-6th, 26th-31st
- **Beer Heights Light Railway** (7.25in): Devon 01297 21542, www.pecorama.co.uk Tuesdays to Saturdays.
- **Lappa Valley Railway** (15, 10.25, 7.25in): Cornwall 01872 510317, www.lappavalley.co.uk Wed-Sun plus 28th-29th
- **Littlehampton Miniature Railway** (12.25in): Sussex www.littlehamptonminiaturerailway.com Weekends
- **Moors Valley Railway** (7.25in): Hants 01425 471415, www.moorsvalleyrailway.co.uk Weekends and 28th-31st
- **North Bay Railway**, Scarborough (20in): Yorks 01723 368791, www.nbr.org.uk, Daily services
- **Rhyl Miniature Railway** (15in): Clwyd 01352 759109, www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk Closed until Dec Santa trains
- **South Downs Light Railway** (10.25in): Sussex 07518 753784, www.south-downs-railway.com 2nd-5th Closed until Santa trains

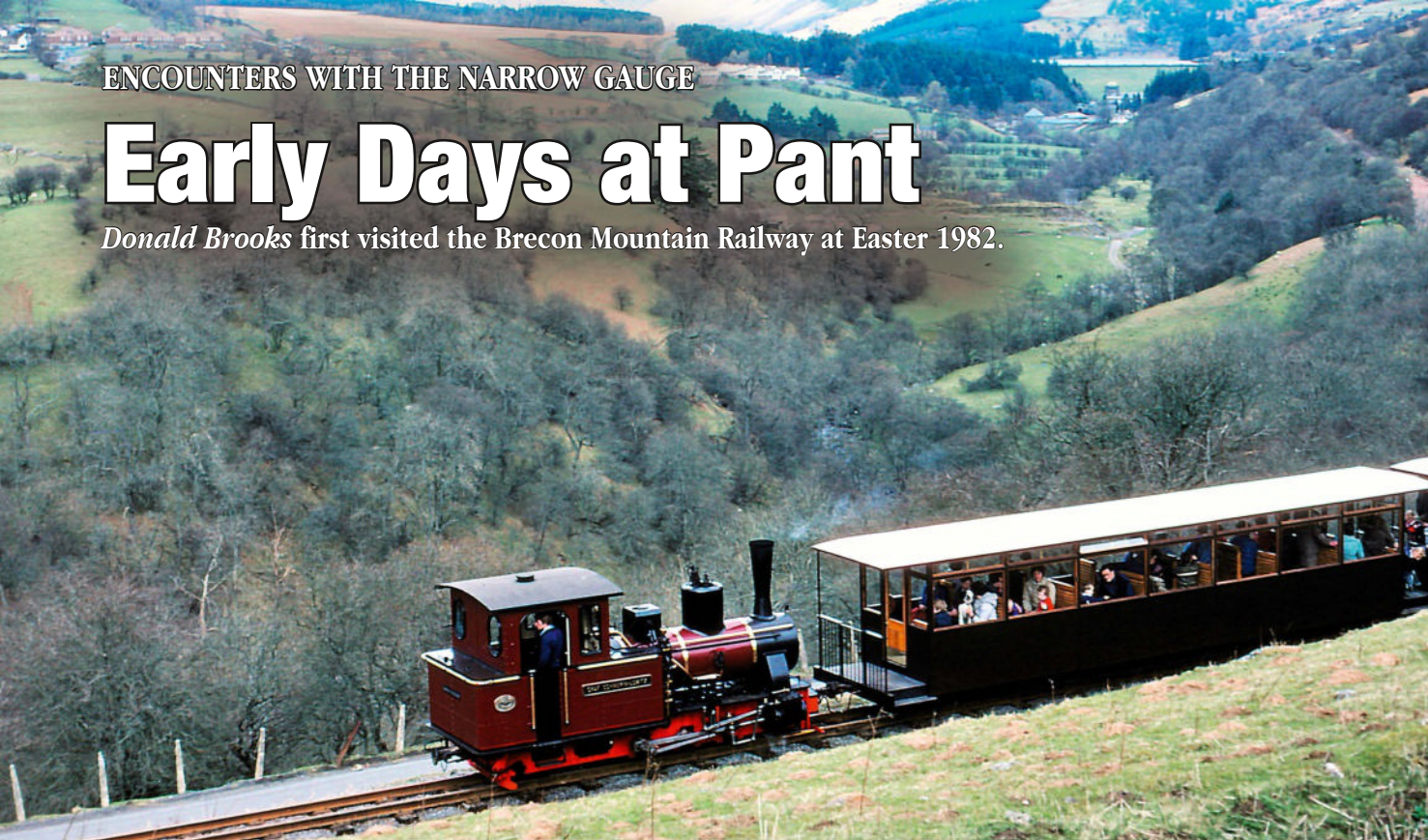
Visit our forum: <http://www.narrow-gauge-forum.co.uk>

What's On

What's On	Tue 1st	Wed 2nd	Thu 3rd	Fri 4th	Sat 5th	Sun 6th	Mon 7th	Tue 8th	Wed 9th	Thu 10th	Fri 11th	Sat 12th	Sun 13th	Mon 14th	Tue 15th	Wed 16th	Thu 17th	Fri 18th	Sat 19th	Sun 20th	Mon 21st	Tue 22nd	Wed 23rd	Thu 24th	Fri 25th	Sat 26th	Sun 27th	Mon 28th	Tue 29th	Wed 30th	Thu 31st	
Alford Valley Community Railway: www.avcr.org.uk																																
Amberley Museum: 01798 831370 www.amberleymuseum.co.uk																																
Amerton Railway: 01785 850965 www.amertonrailway.co.uk																																
Apedale Valley Rly: 0845 094 1953 www.avlr.org.uk																																
Bala Lake Railway: 01678 540666 www.bala-lake-railway.co.uk																																
Brecon Mountain Rly: 01685 722988 www.bmr.wales																																
Bressingham: 01379 686900 www.bressingham.co.uk																																
Bure Valley Railway: 01263 733858 www.bvrw.co.uk																																
Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway 01472 604657 www.cclr.co.uk																																
Corris Railway: 01654 761303, www.corris.co.uk																																
Evesham Light Rly: 01386 422282 www.valleyrailwayadventure.co.uk																																
Exbury Gardens Railway: 023 80891203 www.exbury.co.uk																																
Fairbourne Railway: 01341 250362 www.fairbournerrailway.com																																
Ffestiniog Railway: 01766 516000 www.festrail.co.uk																																
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Groudle Glen Railway: 01624 670453 www.ggr.org.uk																																
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Hayling Light Railway: 07902 446340 haylinglightrailway.wixsite.com/ehlr																																
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Ravenglass & Eskdale Rly: 01229 717171 www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk																																
Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Rly 01797 362353, www.rhdr.org.uk																																
Ruislip Lido Railway: 01895 622595 www.ruislidlidorailway.org																																
Sittingbourne & Kemsley Railway: 01795 424899, www.sklr.net																																
Snowdon Mountain Rly: 0870 450 0033 www.snowdonrailway.co.uk																																
South Tynedale Rly: 01434 381696 www.south-tynedale-railway.org.uk																																
Steeple Grange Lt Rly: 01629 55123 www.steeplegrange.co.uk																																
Talyllyn Railway: 01654 710472 www.tallyllyn.co.uk																																
Teifi Valley Railway: 01559 371077 www.teifivalleyrailway.wales																																
Threlkeld Msm: 01768 779747, www.threlkeldquarryandminingmuseum.co.uk																																
Vale of Rheidol Rly: 01970 625819 www.rheidolrailway.co.uk																																
Waterworks Railway: 020 8568 4757 www.waterandsteam.org.uk																																
Wells Walsingham Rly: 01328 711630 www.wwlr.co.uk																																
Welsh Highland Railway 01766 516000, www.festrail.co.uk																																
Welsh Highland Heritage Railway 01766 513402, www.whr.co.uk																																
Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway 01938 810441, www.wllr.org.uk																																
West Lancashire Light Railway 01772 815881, www.westlancs.org																																
KEY Trains (steam or diesel), Special events, No trains	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	

Early Days at Pant

Donald Brooks first visited the Brecon Mountain Railway at Easter 1982.



With its six-coupled Baldwin tender locomotives and the unusual sight of a caboose in its trains, the Brecon Mountain Railway (BMR) cultivates quite an American image these days. When the line opened in 1980, though, it provided a much more European experience and in its very first season it could scarcely have been more Welsh, with ex-Pen-yr-Orsedd 0-4-0ST 'Sybil', Hunslet 827 of 1903, hauling the one-carriage trains.

In the year after a German import took over in the shape of a loco from the Mecklenburg-Pommersche Schmalspurbahn (MPSB), a closed 60cm gauge network in the north east of what was then East Germany.

The 0-6-2WTT 'Graf Schwerin-Löwitz', Jung 1261 of 1908, was the MPSB's second number 5, later becoming the Deutsche Reichsbahn's 99.3353 before being sold into

preservation three years after the MPSB's final closure in 1969. The name is original, though it does not appear to have been carried latterly in Germany, possibly because Conservative politicians and landowners such as the Pomeranian Count Schwerin-Löwitz were not deemed suitable role models in the Communist DDR.

The BMR has always been renowned for the quality of its engineering work and Graf Schwerin-Löwitz was immaculately restored and turned out in an attractive maroon livery. When I first encountered it at Easter 1982 it was easily master of its task, hauling two end-balconied carriages over the two or three kilometres from Pant, just north of Merthyr Tydfil, to Pontsticill, where the station is spectacularly situated overlooking the reservoir.

The 1ft 11¼in gauge track was

Above: Despite the short length of the early Brecon line, the scenery was compared to North Wales. As 'Graf Schwerin-Löwitz' returns to Pant, Pontsticill reservoir can be seen in the background, with beyond the Bannau Brycheiniog, the Brecon Beacons.

Below: In 1982 Pant station was a building site as work began on the new terminus building. Tickets were sold from the Portakabin.

Photos by Donald Brooks, 10th April 1982

laid on the abandoned trackbed of the standard gauge Brecon & Merthyr Railway, itself closed not long before the MPSB, with the work including the replacement of several bridges and a deviation at the southern end where the original route was unavailable.

Work in progress

In 1982 Pant station was still under development and consisted of a short, unsurfaced platform with a run-round loop and Portakabin for ticket sales. Excavations were continuing around the site and although it was all fairly basic it meant that trains could operate over the short but scenic route to generate income for the project. I recall how impressed I was when I returned later in the decade to find the new multi-level combined station and works complex transforming the site, a lasting tribute to the drive and vision of Tony Hills, the line's founder.

Since the 1980s the BMR has been extended in two stages and now provides an 8km run over severe gradients up to Torpantau. Sadly the climb proved too much for Graf Schwerin-Löwitz. In late 2023, at much the same time as the Vale of Rheidol took over the BMR, the locomotive, which had by then acquired a tender, moved to the Rheidol's new Aberystwyth museum as a static exhibit. Following the death of Tony Hills in 2015 the BMR had seemed unsurprisingly to lose some of the momentum from earlier days, but under its new ownership and with new management in place it looks set for a bright future again. **NGW**



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